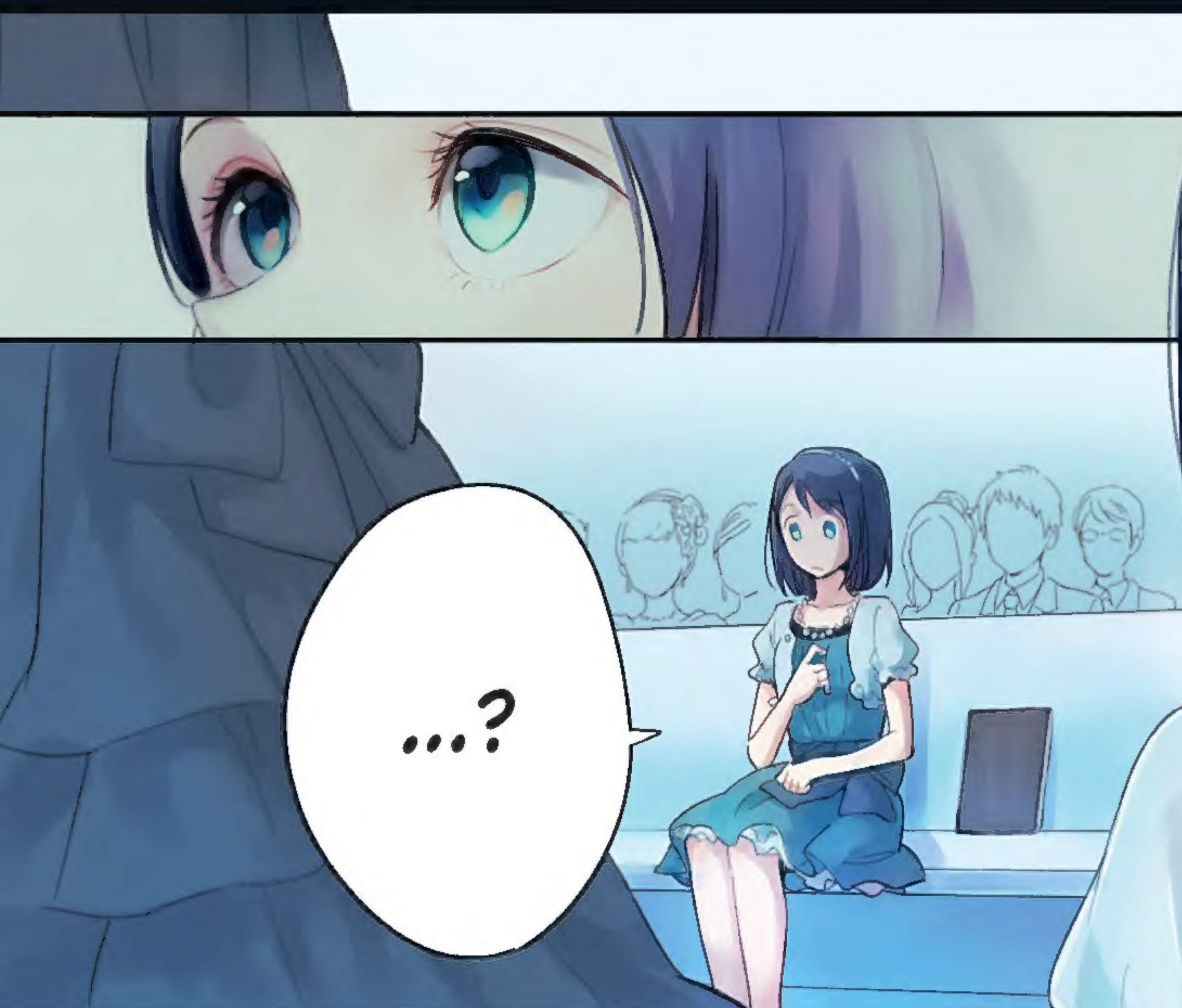




If I Could Reach You

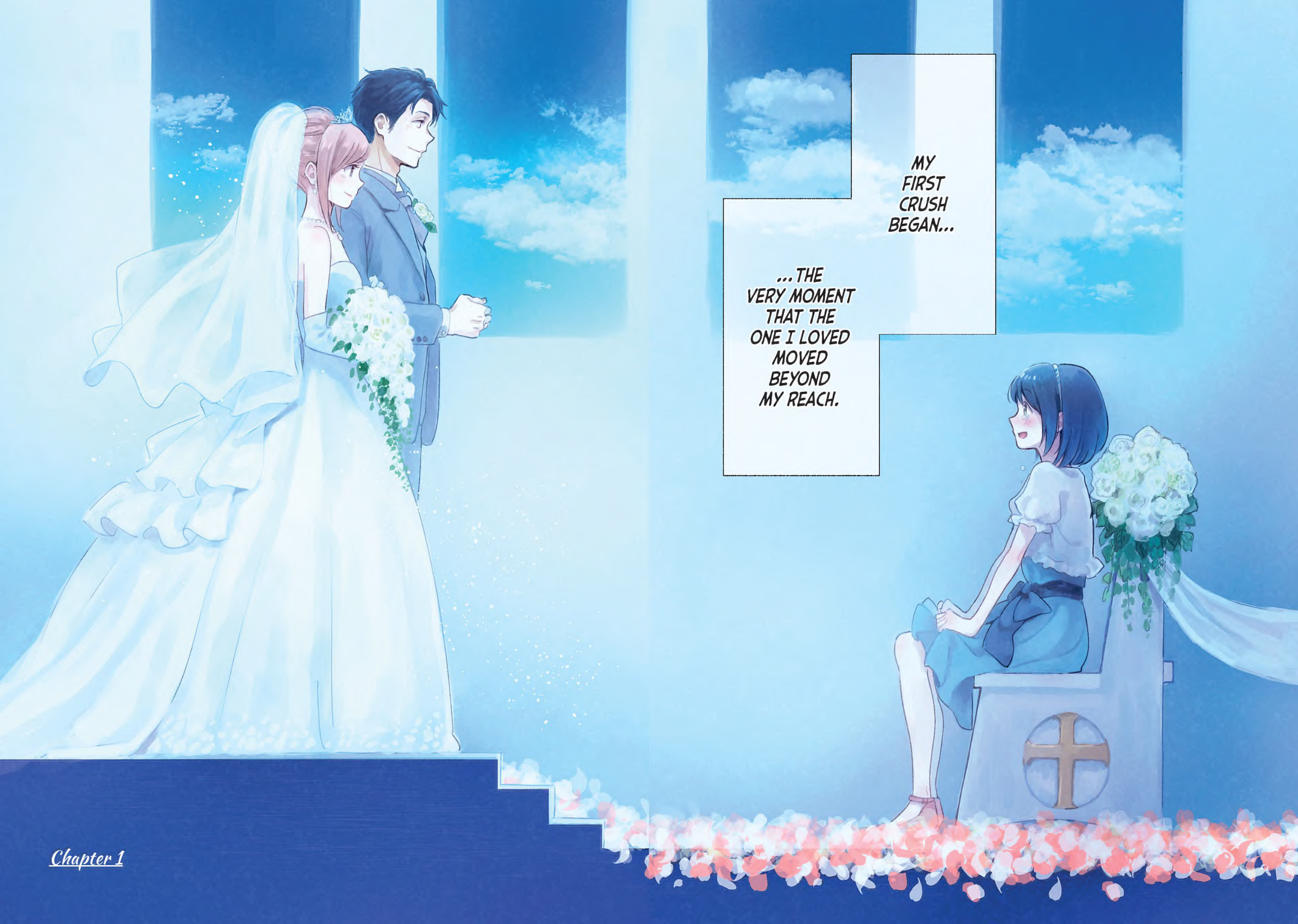
1
—
tMnR

If I Could Reach You 1 tMnR



...?





MY
FIRST
CRUSH
BEGAN...

...THE
VERY MOMENT
THAT THE
ONE I LOVED
MOVED
BEYOND
MY REACH.

If I Could Reach You

1

C O N T E N T S

Chapter 1

001

Chapter 2

039

Chapter 3

069

Chapter 4

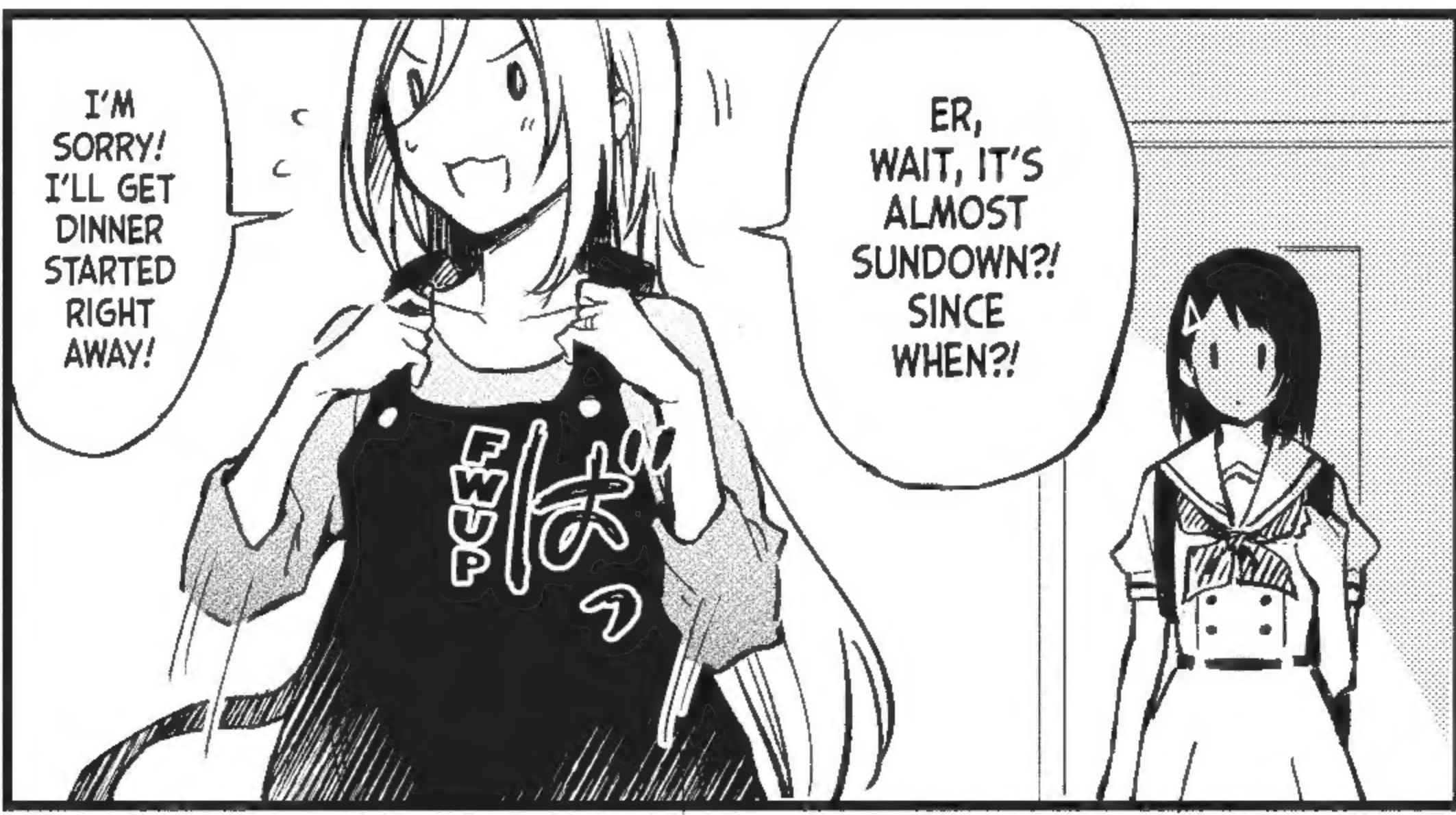
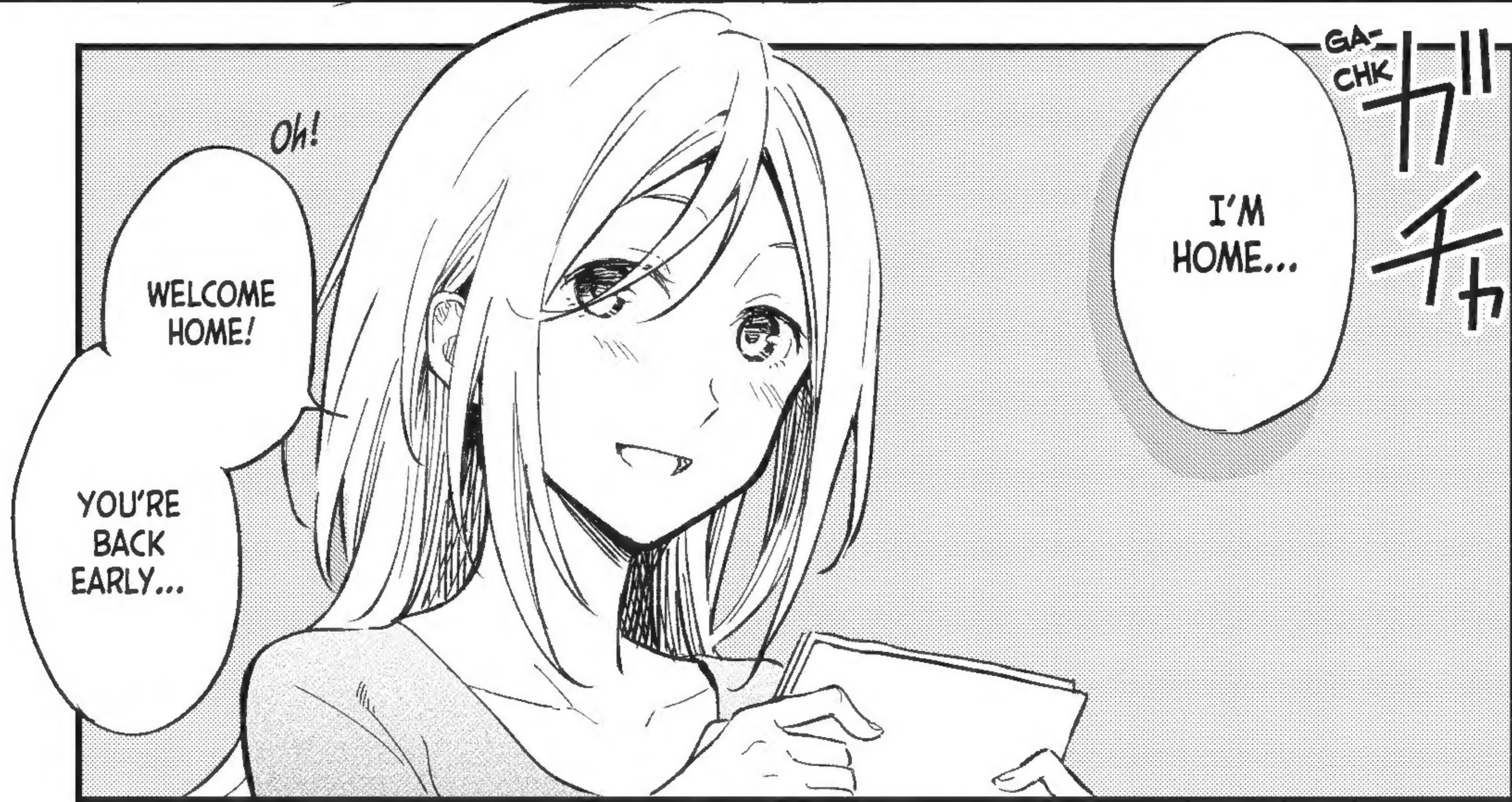
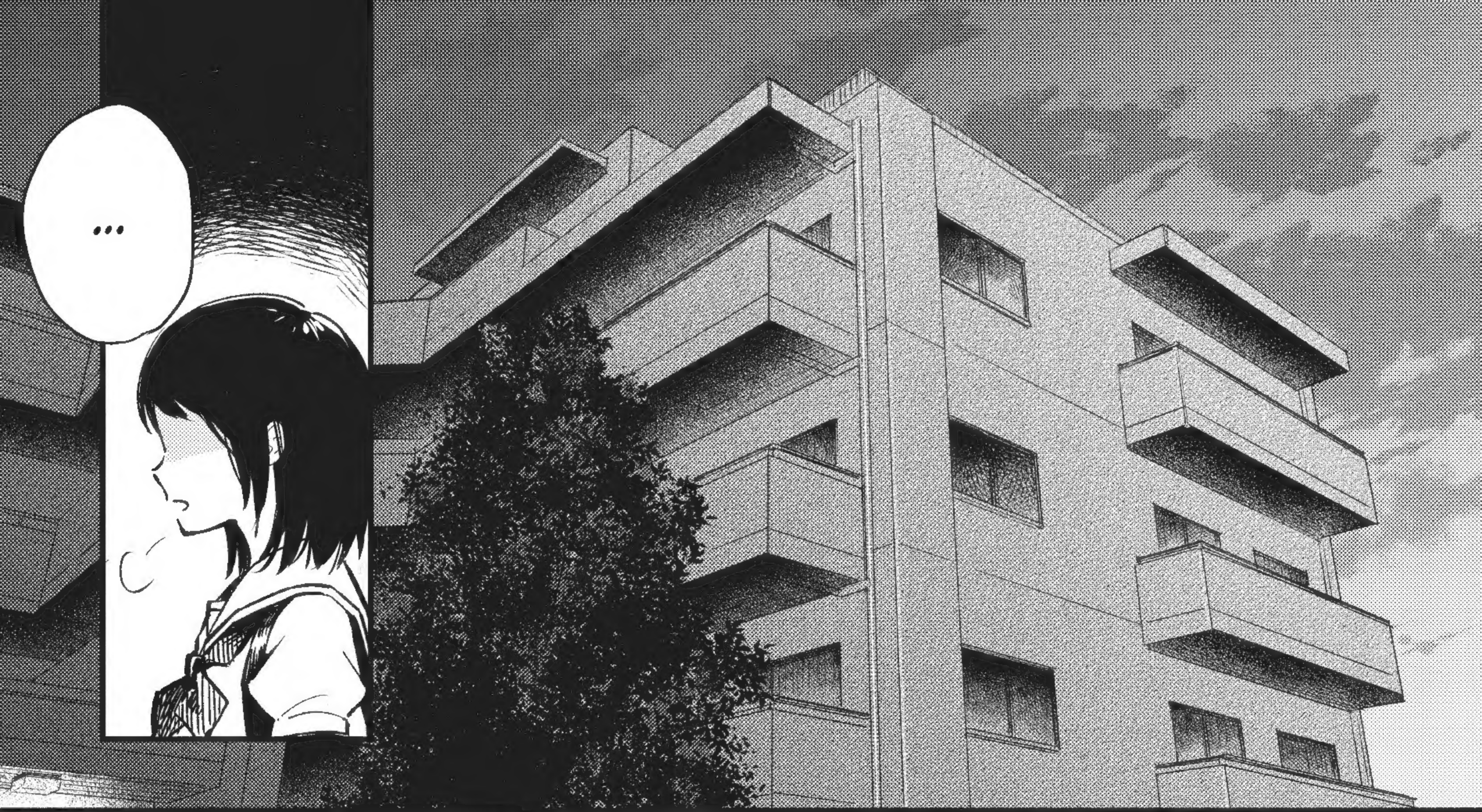
099

Chapter 5

129

Afterword

162

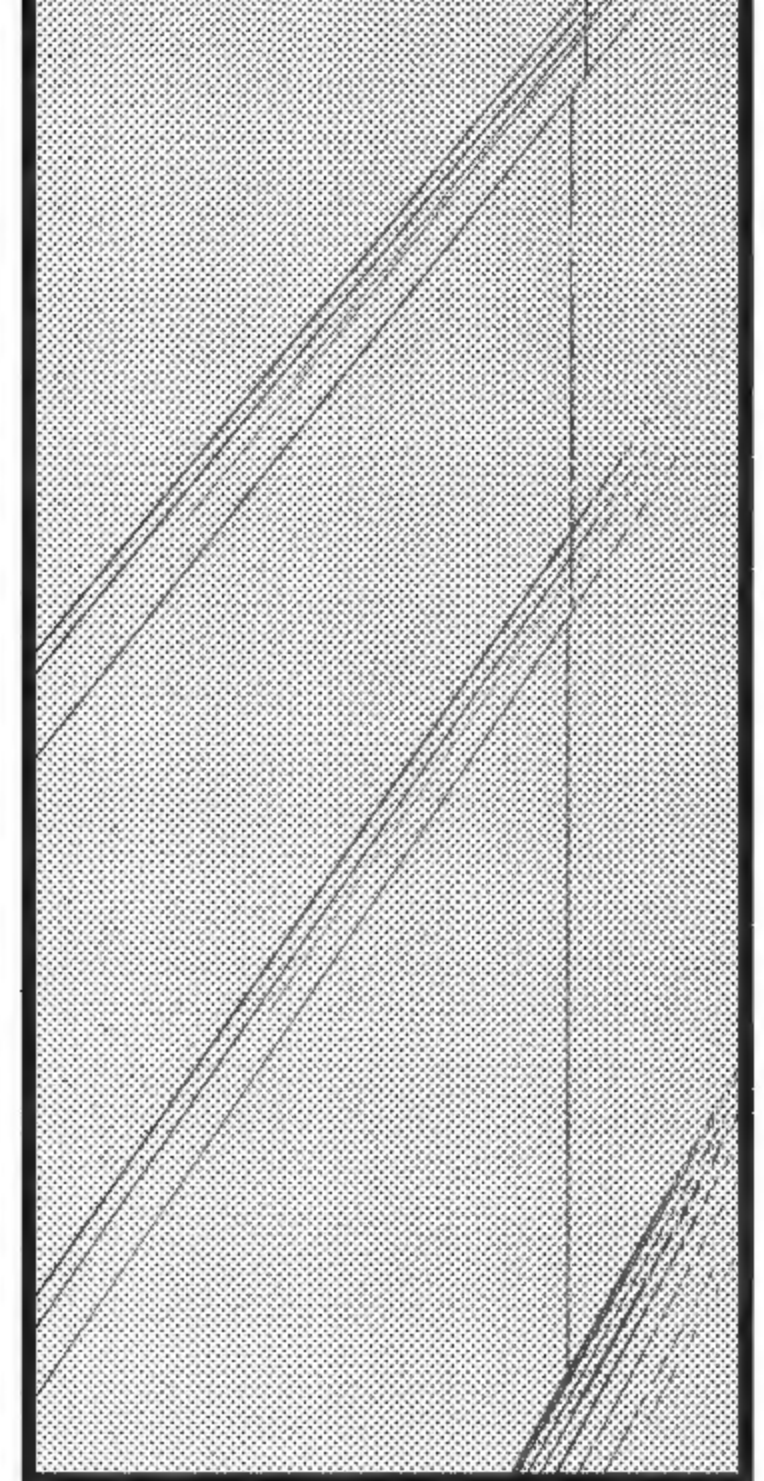






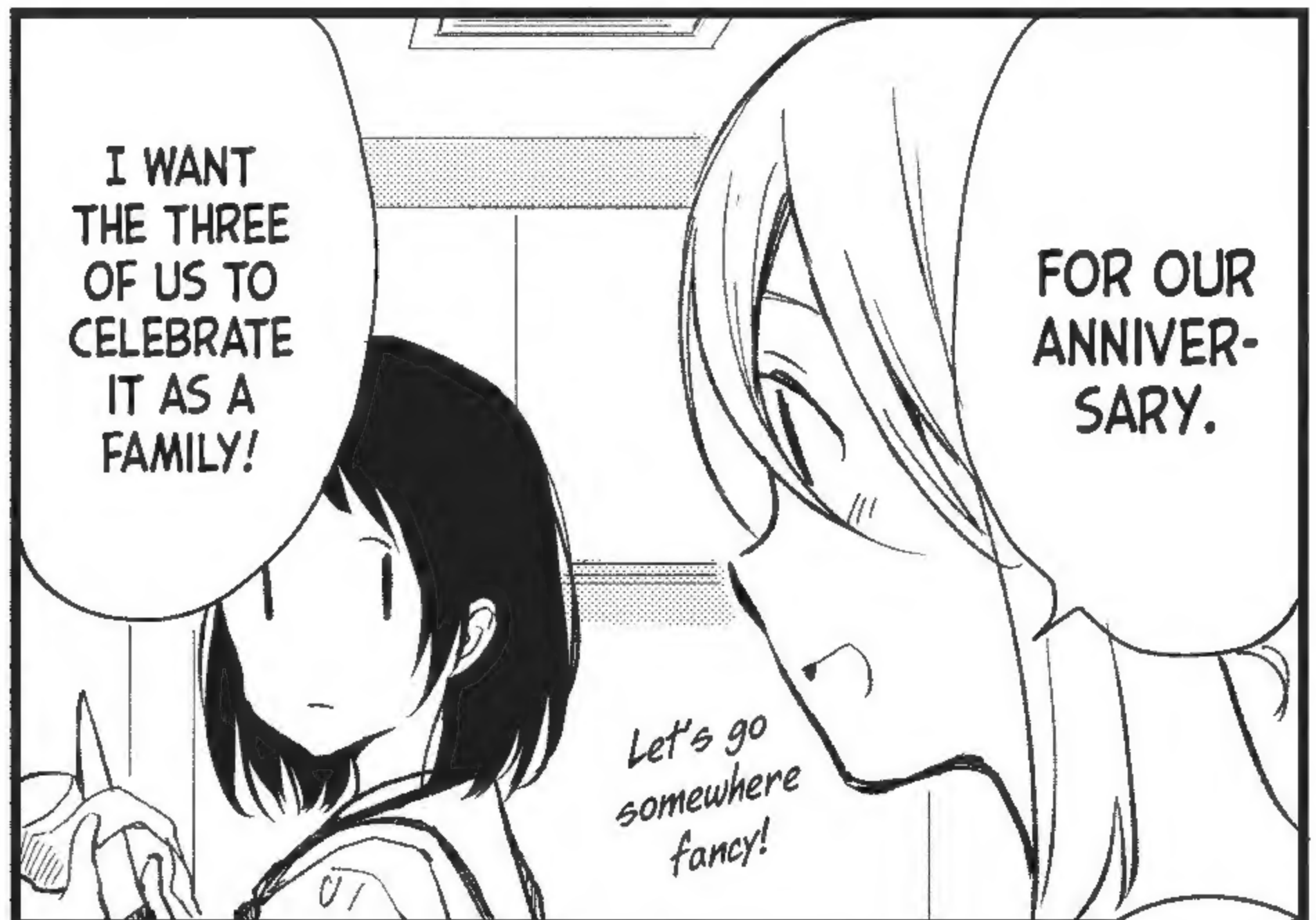
UTA-CHAN,
IS THERE
ANYWHERE
YOU'D LIKE
TO GO EAT?

THAT
REMINDS
ME!



OH...

I'M
OKAY.



I WANT
THE THREE
OF US TO
CELEBRATE
IT AS A
FAMILY!

FOR OUR
ANNIVER-
SARY.

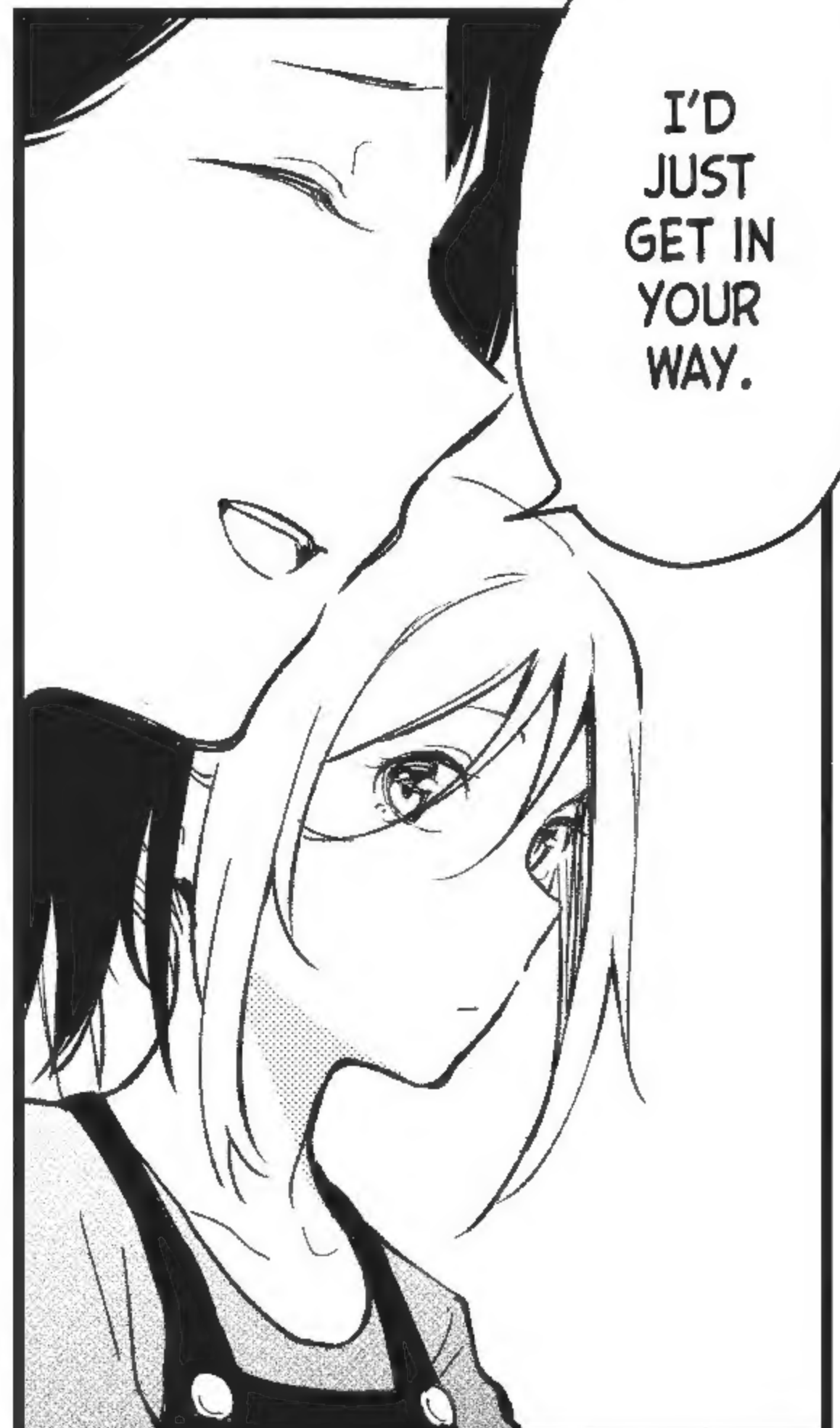
*Let's go
somewhere
fancy!*



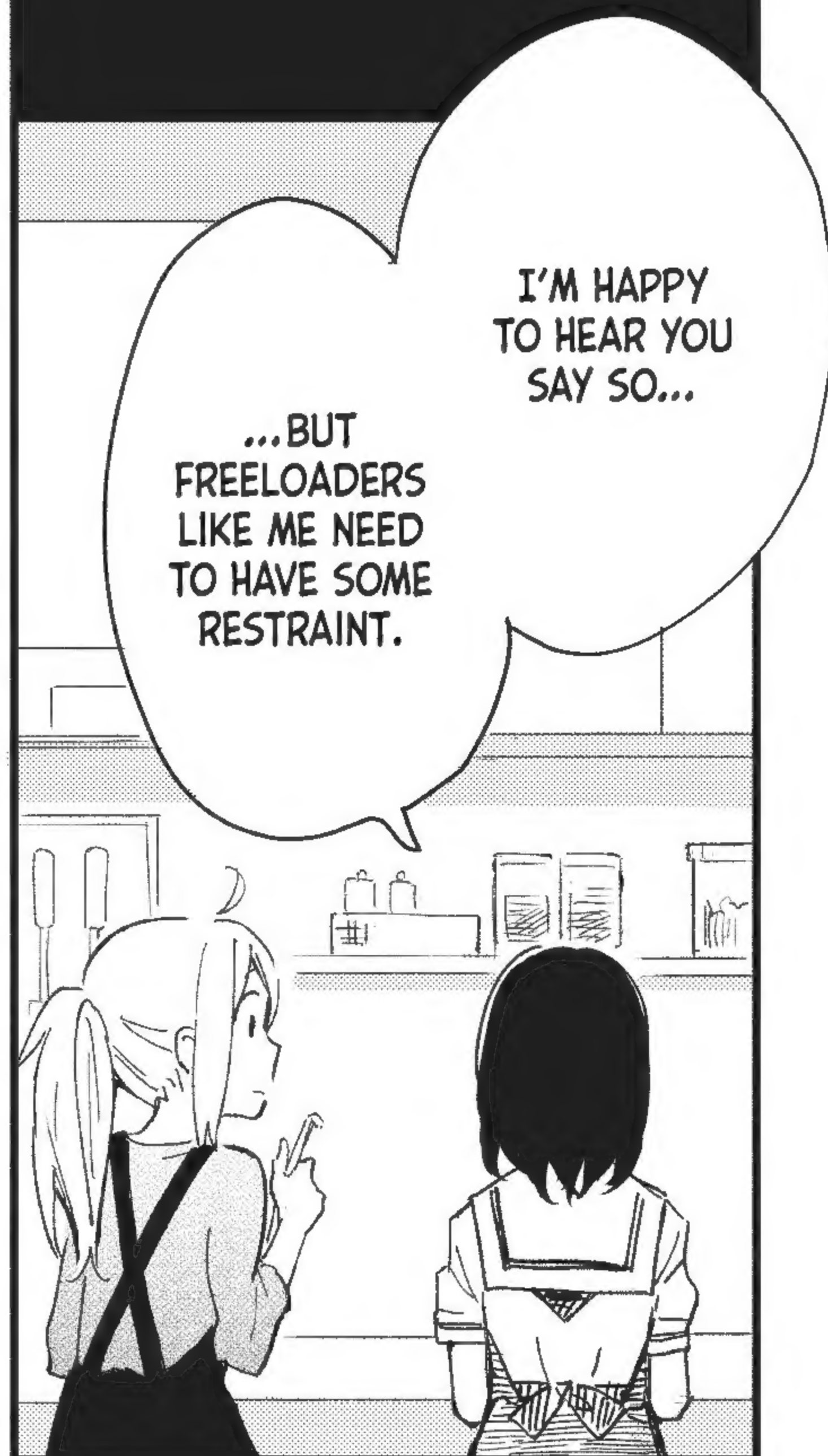
I DON'T
MIND, AND
I'M SURE
REIICHI-KUN
DOESN'T,
EITHER.

YOU
DON'T
NEED TO
WORRY
ABOUT
THAT!

*Good-
ness!*



I'D
JUST
GET IN
YOUR
WAY.



BUT I'M
HERE TO
SUPPORT
YOU—
WHENEVER
YOU
NEED IT.

...

UTA-CHAN,
I HEARD YOU
FACED A LOT
OF HARDSHIPS
WHERE YOU LIVED
BEFORE, SO...

I WAS
HOPING OUR
PLACE COULD
BECOME A *HOME*
TO YOU AS SOON
AS POSSIBLE...
WHERE YOU
COULD REALLY
FEEL AT
EASE...

...I DON'T
WANT TO BE
PUSHY, THOUGH...
AND I BET
THIS MUST
BE PRETTY
HARD, HUH?

IF YOU'RE
EVER UPSET,
OR
WORRIED...

...DON'T
KEEP IT
BOTTLED UP.
YOU CAN
ASK ME FOR
ADVICE ON
ANYTHING!



IF
I WERE
TO TELL
YOU THAT
I LOVE
YOU...

...WOULD
YOU STILL
HAVE ANY
ADVICE TO
GIVE?

SINCE SHE
LIVED NEARBY,
AND WAS A
FRIENDLY BIG
SISTER TO ME,
I ALWAYS
ADORED HER,
TOO.

IT WAS
TO HIS
CHILDHOOD
FRIEND,
KAORU-
SAN.

ONE
YEAR AGO,
MY OLDER
BROTHER,
REI-KUN, GOT
MARRIED.

...OR, RATHER,
I NEVER NOTICED
THAT IT HAD
TURNED INTO LOVE-
EVEN AS I WATCHED
THE TWO GROW
CLOSER.

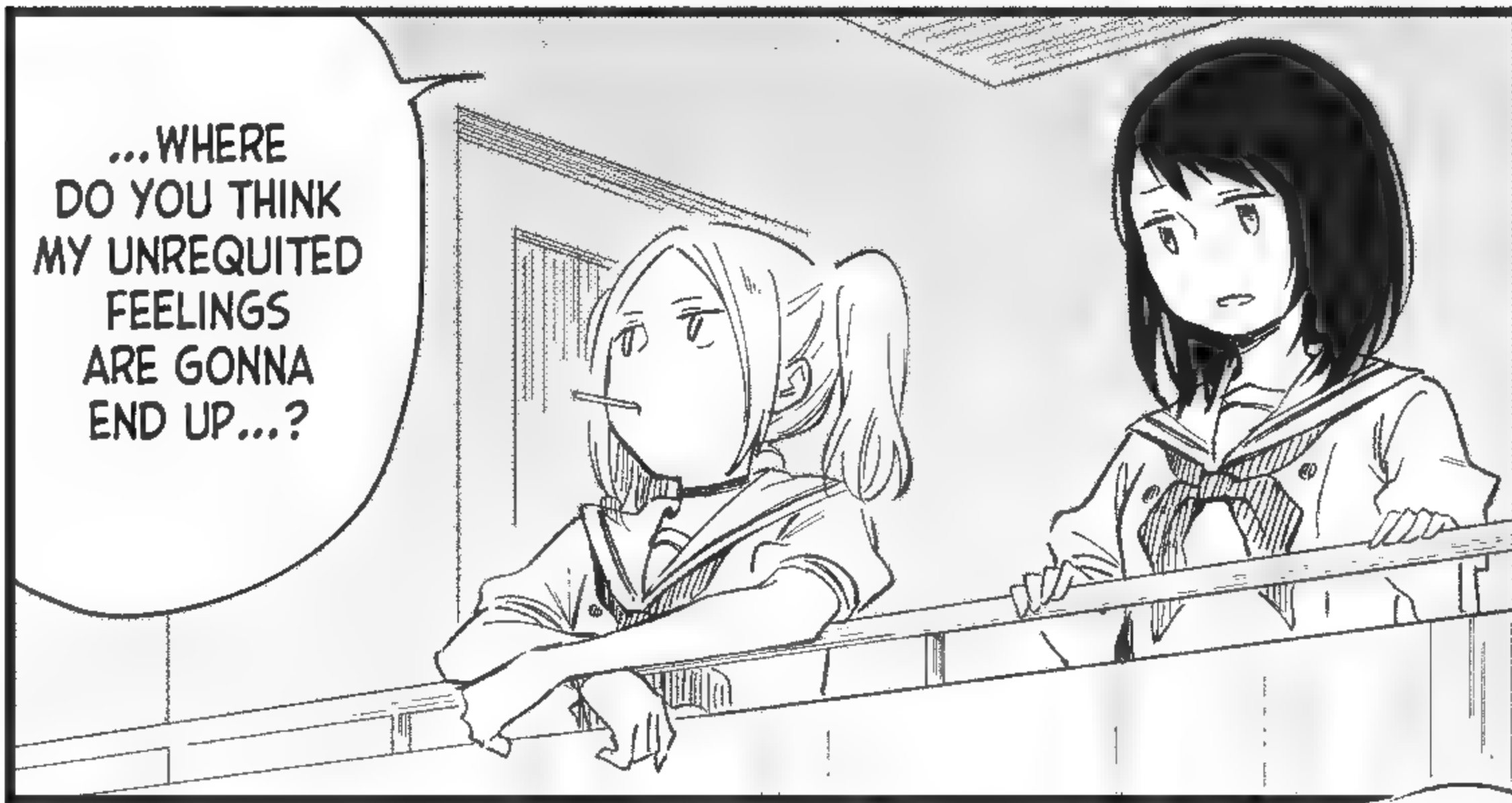
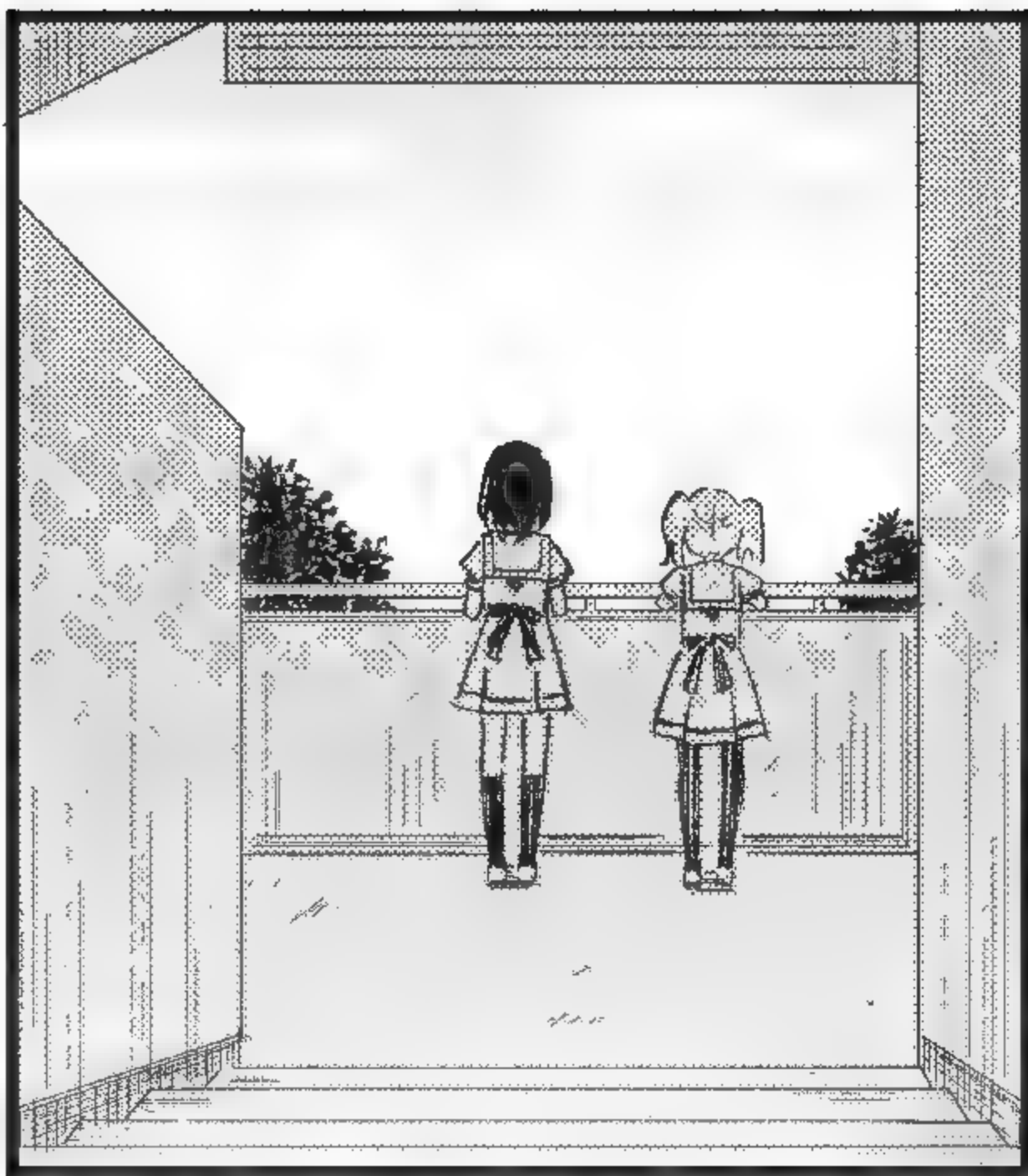
IT WASN'T
UNTIL THEIR
WEDDING
THAT I FINALLY
REALIZED...

I WAS STILL
SO YOUNG,
I HAD NO IDEA
THAT WHAT
I WAS FEELING
WAS LOVE...

THAT
DAY WAS
WHEN...

...THIS LOVE
I COULD NEVER
EVEN DREAM TO
CONFESS BEGAN.

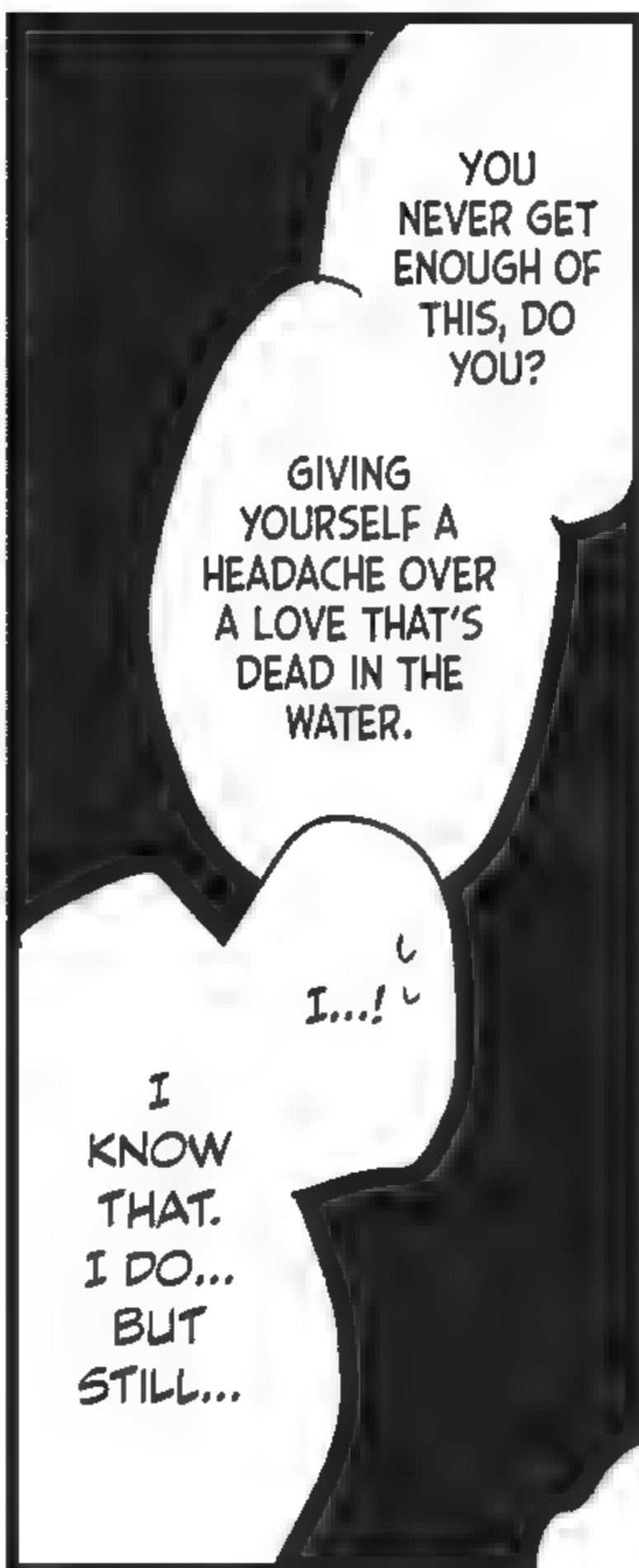
A ONE-SIDED LOVE...
A TOO-LATE LOVE.



...WHERE
DO YOU THINK
MY UNREQUITED
FEELINGS
ARE GONNA
END UP...?



SAY,
KURO-
CHAN...



YOU
NEVER GET
ENOUGH OF
THIS, DO
YOU?

GIVING
YOURSELF A
HEADACHE OVER
A LOVE THAT'S
DEAD IN THE
WATER.

I...!

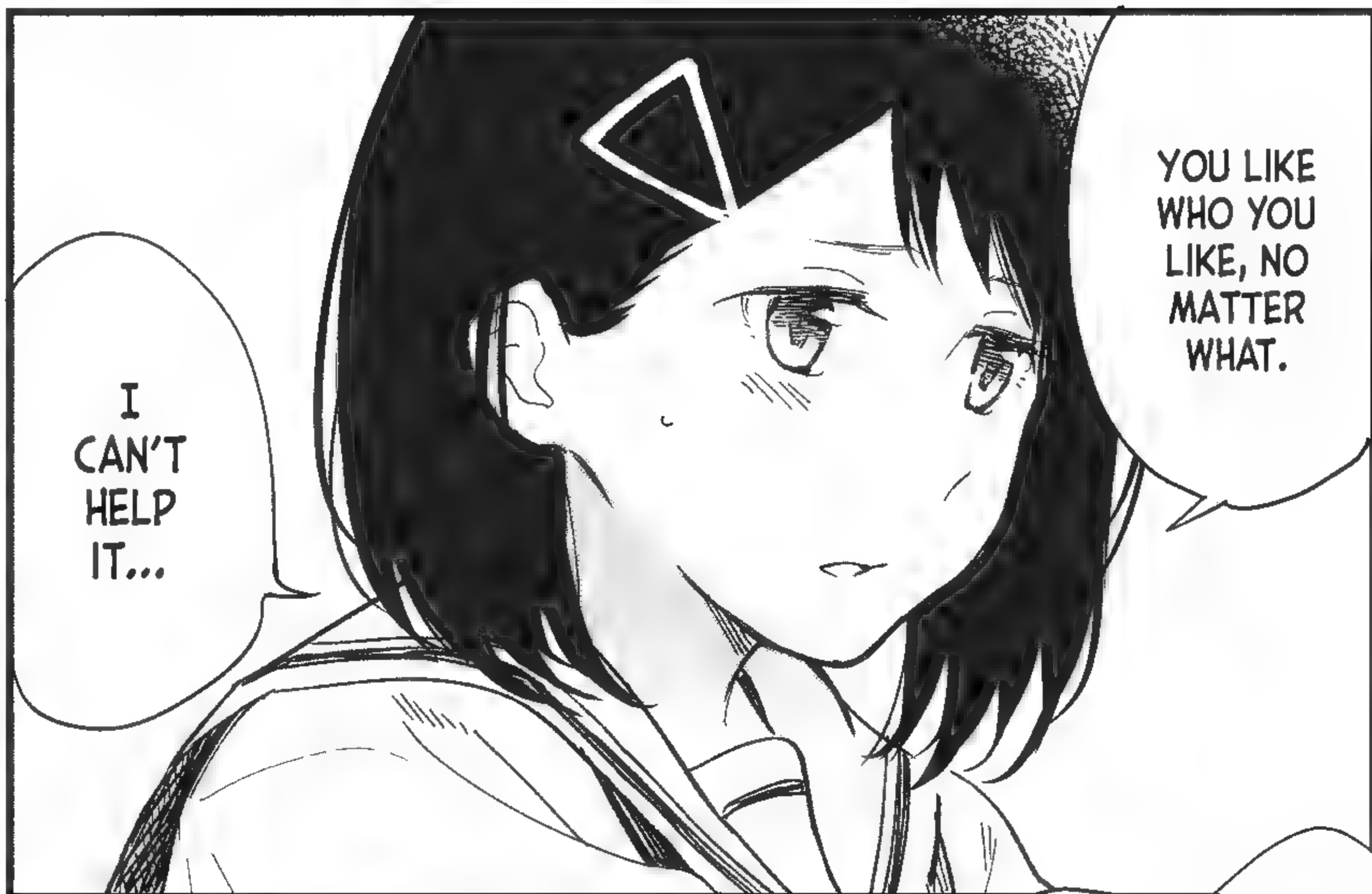
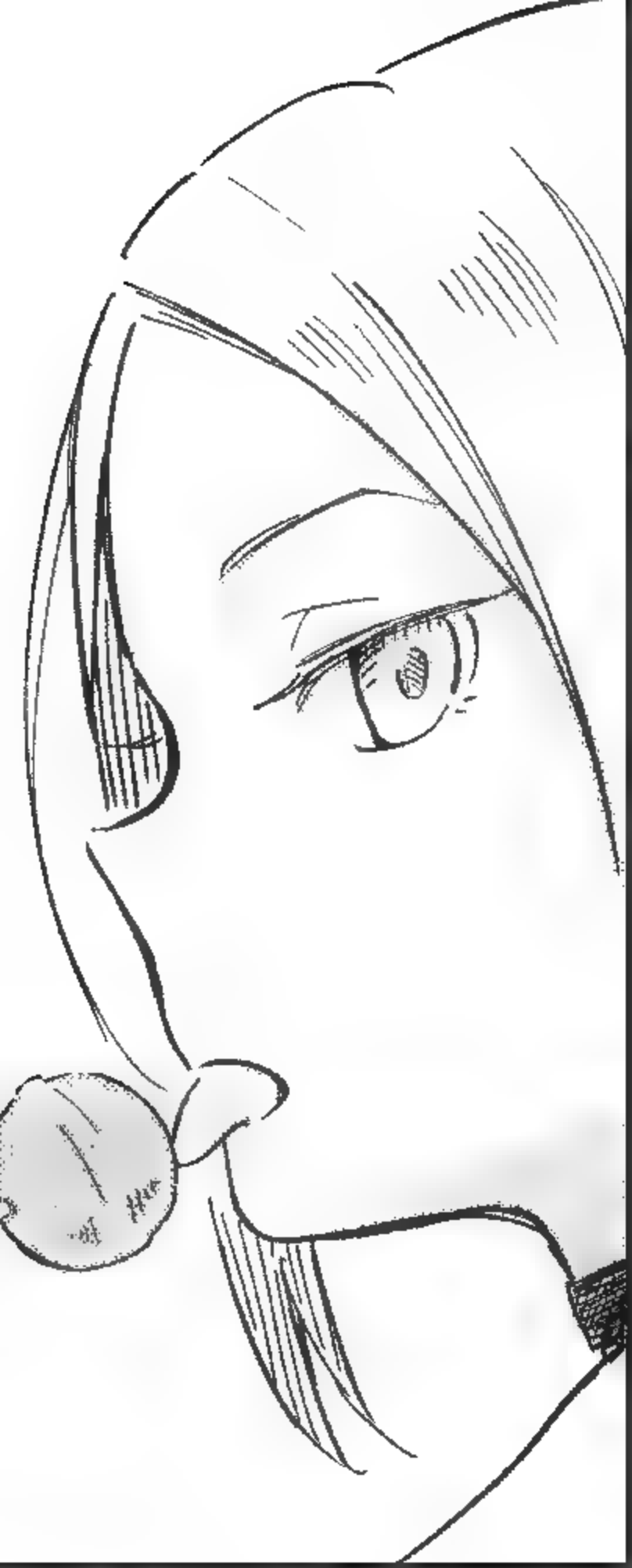
I
KNOW
THAT.
I DO...
BUT
STILL...



I'M
GETTING
SICK OF
HEARING
ABOUT
IT!



*THIS
AGAIN?*



I
CAN'T
HELP
IT...

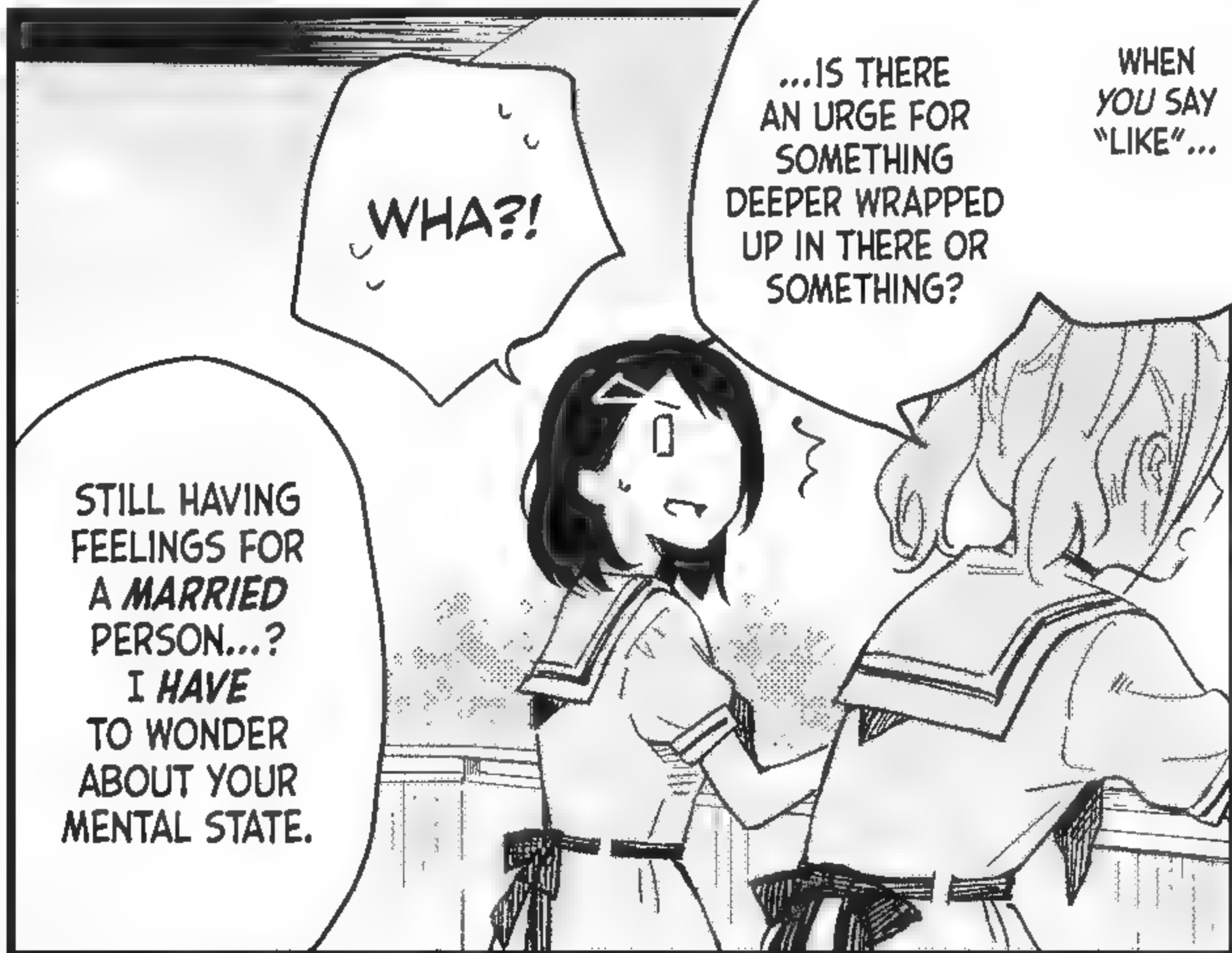
YOU LIKE
WHO YOU
LIKE, NO
MATTER
WHAT.



NO,
UH, OF
COURSE
I MEAN,
I...

I'M
DEFINITELY
NOT
THINKING
ABOUT...

...ANYTHING
WEIRD LIKE
THAT, OR, ♪
WELL... ♪



WHA?!

STILL HAVING
FEELINGS FOR
A **MARRIED**
PERSON...?
I **HAVE**
TO WONDER
ABOUT YOUR
MENTAL STATE.

...IS THERE
AN URGE FOR
SOMETHING
DEEPER WRAPPED
UP IN THERE OR
SOMETHING?

WHEN
YOU SAY
"LIKE"...



AHA,
SO SHE IS
THINKING
ABOUT THIS
PROPERLY.

...any-
one...

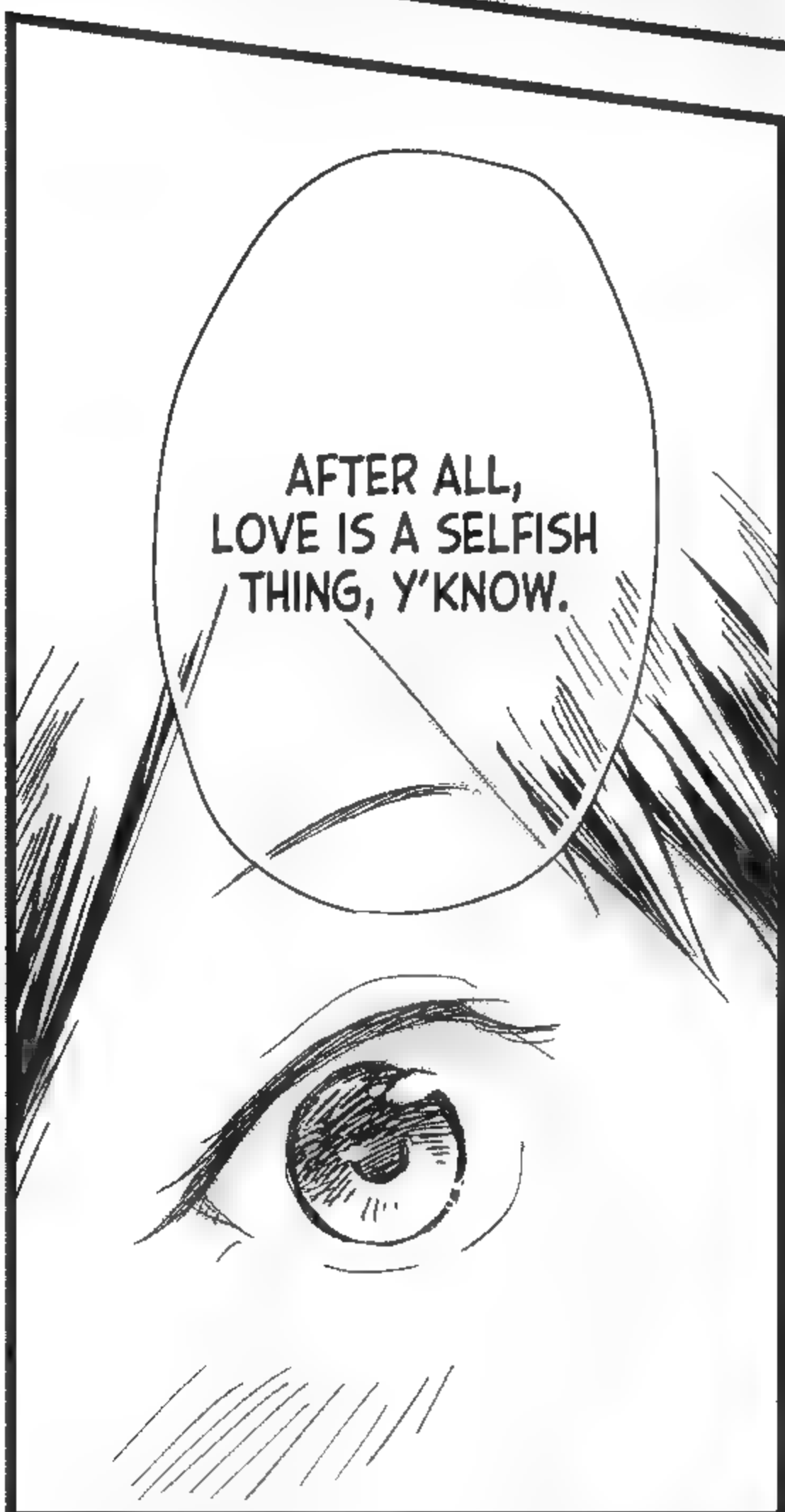
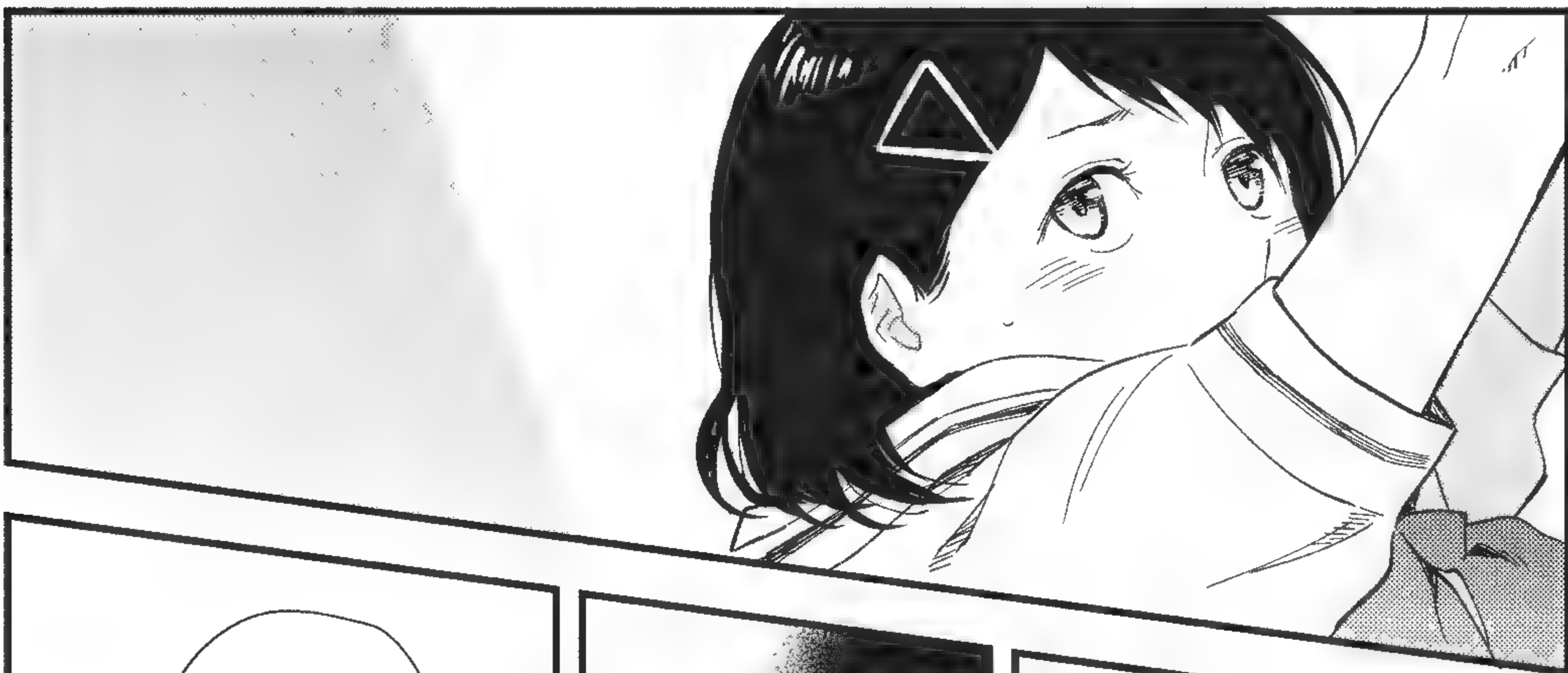
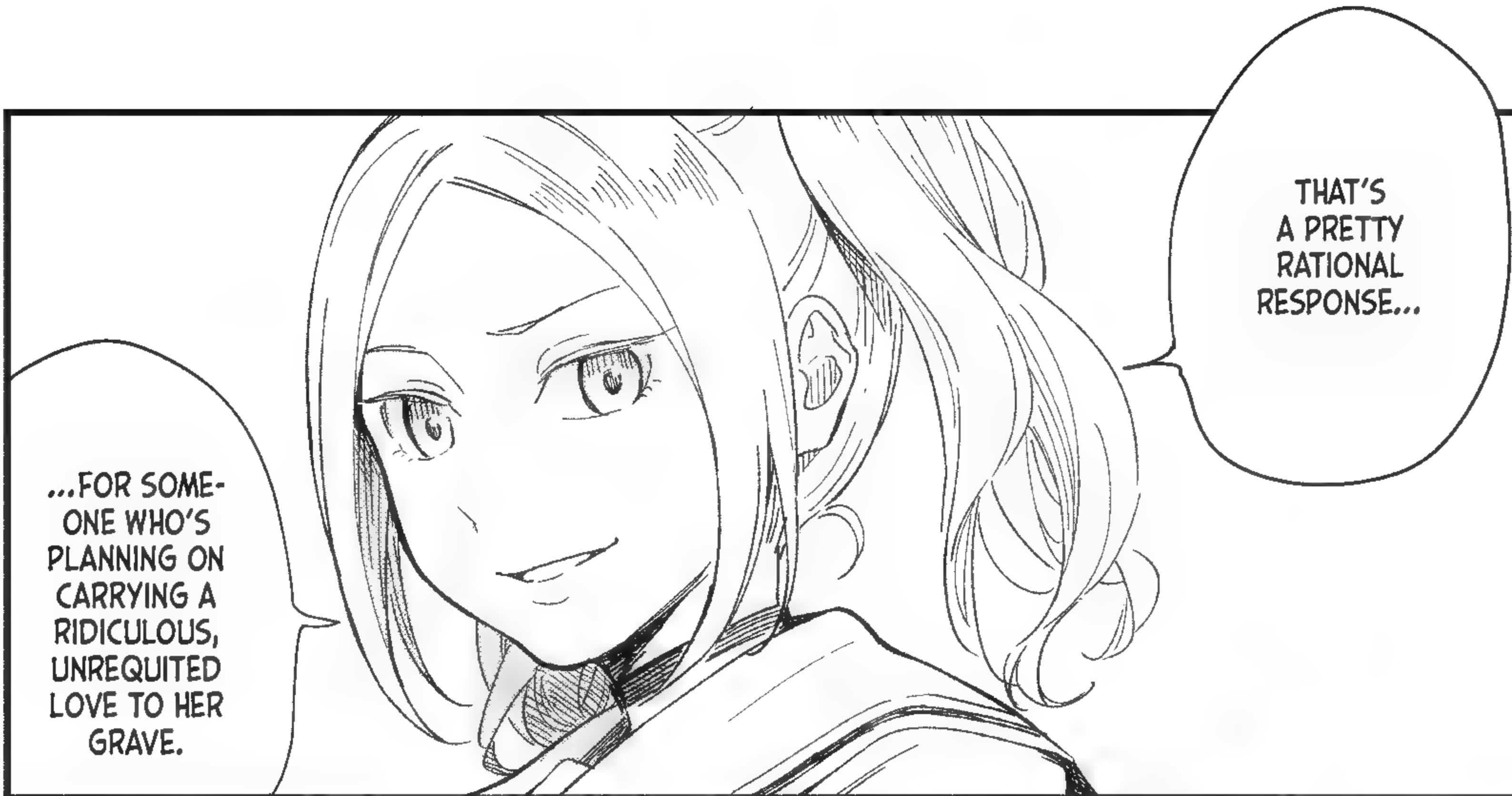


...THAT
DON'T
BOTHR
...

I JUST
WANT TO
TRY TO
HAVE FEEL-
INGS...



OF
COURSE
I KNOW THAT
I SHOULD
SEPARATE
THAT KINDA...



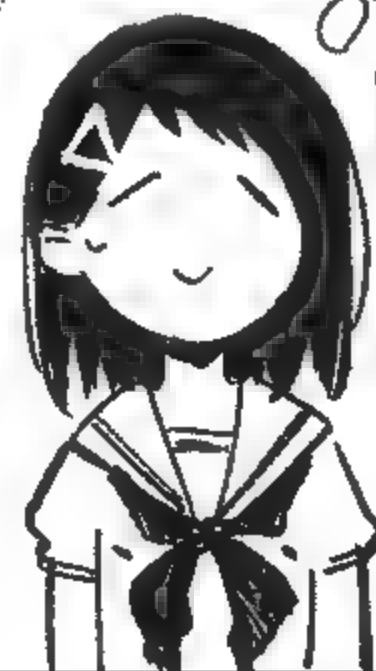
KURO-
CHAN CAN
BE PRETTY
RECKLESS.

SO SOME-
TIMES THE
STUFF SHE
SAYS IS A
LITTLE OUT
THERE.

I
almost
agreed
with her!

...WELL.

NO,
THAT'S
EASY
ENOUGH
TO SAY,
BUT...



MMN.

It's
always
the same
with you.

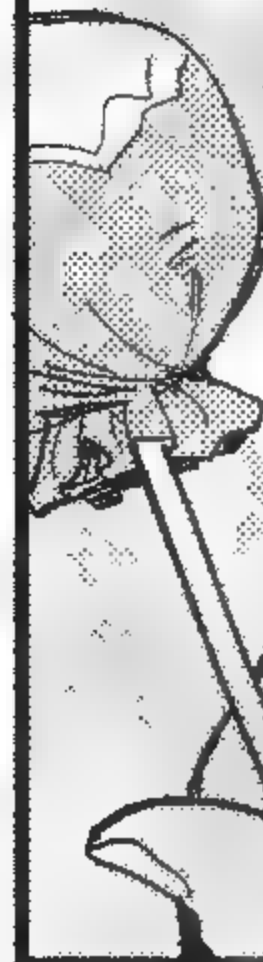
Here
you
go.

THANKS.

I'M NOT
SURE I CAN
TAKE THAT
ADVICE, BUT
I DO FEEL
BETTER!

THOUGH...

...I FIND
THAT PART OF
HER ALWAYS SAVES
ME FROM MYSELF.



LET'S
EAT!





5000...

REIICHI-KUN,
YOU WERE ABLE
TO GET THE DAY
OFF FOR OUR
ANNIVERSARY,
RIGHT?



...I
DID.

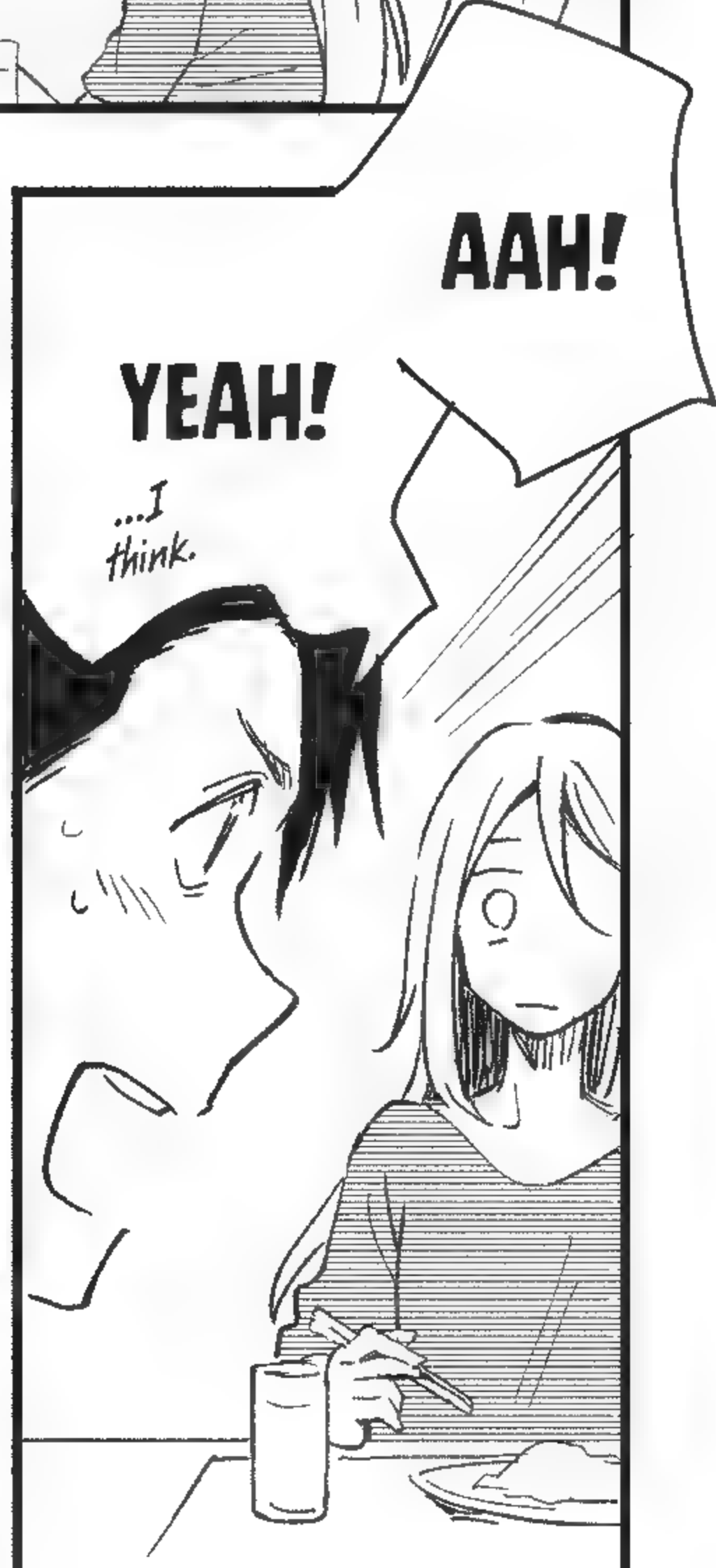
OH? DON'T
TELL ME YOU
ACTUALLY
FORGOT OUR
WEDDING
ANNIVER-
SARY?

UH...
WELL...

ERR.

MM,
YOU
THINK?

I MEAN,
REI-KUN
CAN'T EVEN
REMEMBER
PEOPLE'S
BIRTHDAYS...



AAH!

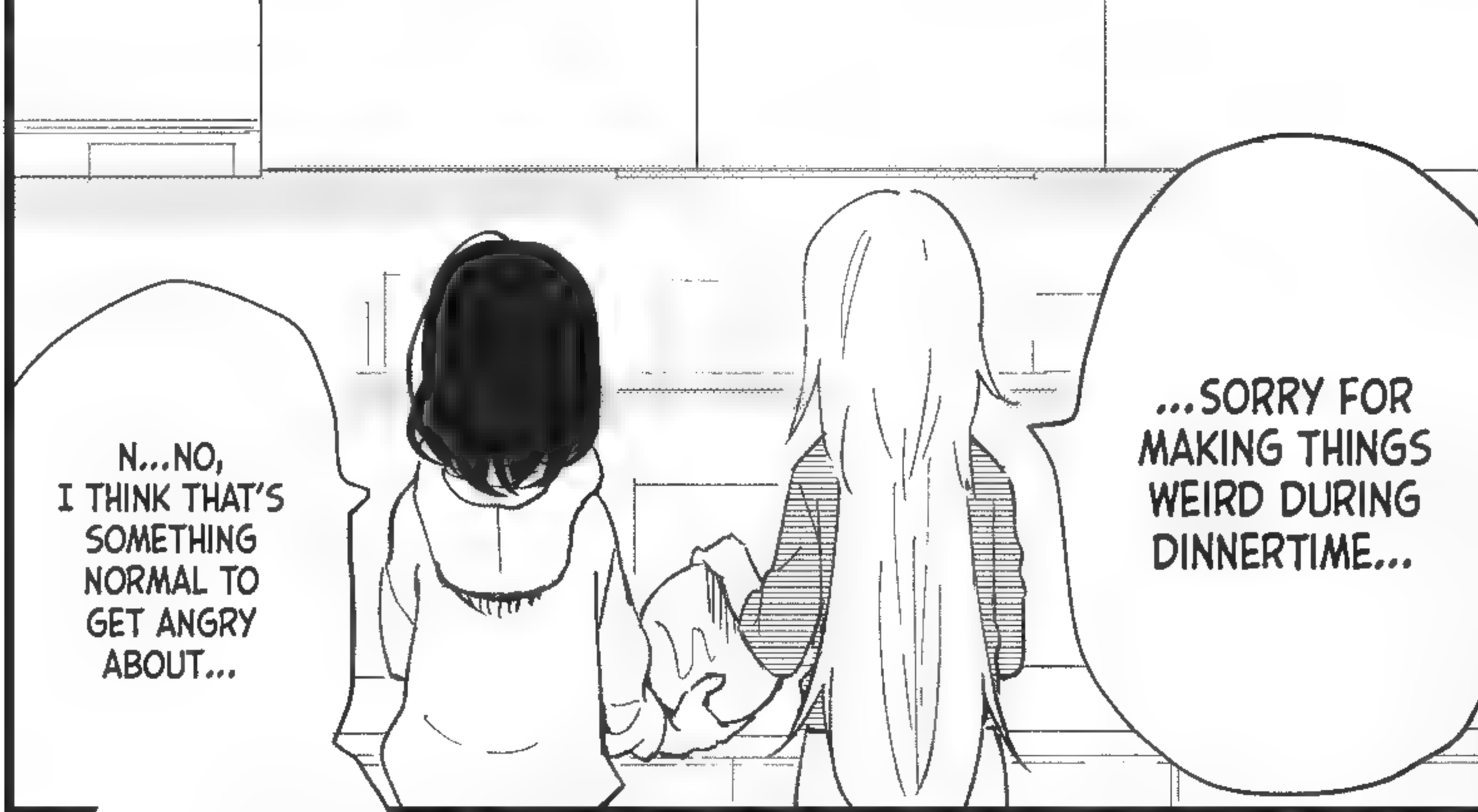
YEAH!

...I
think.



70 SNAP

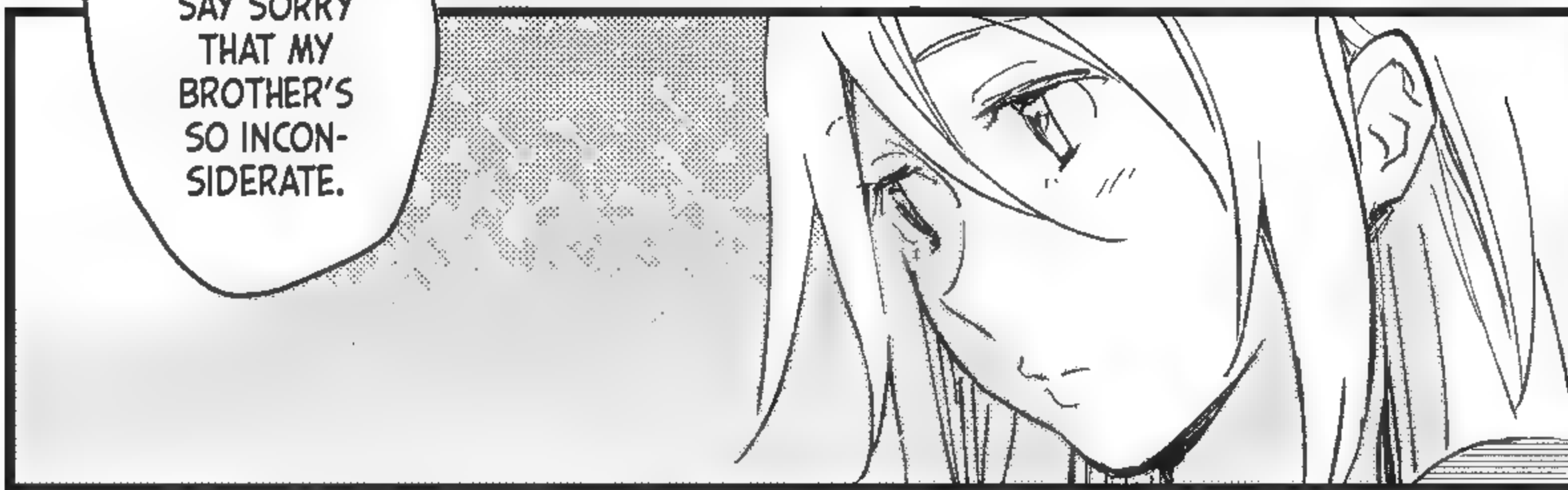




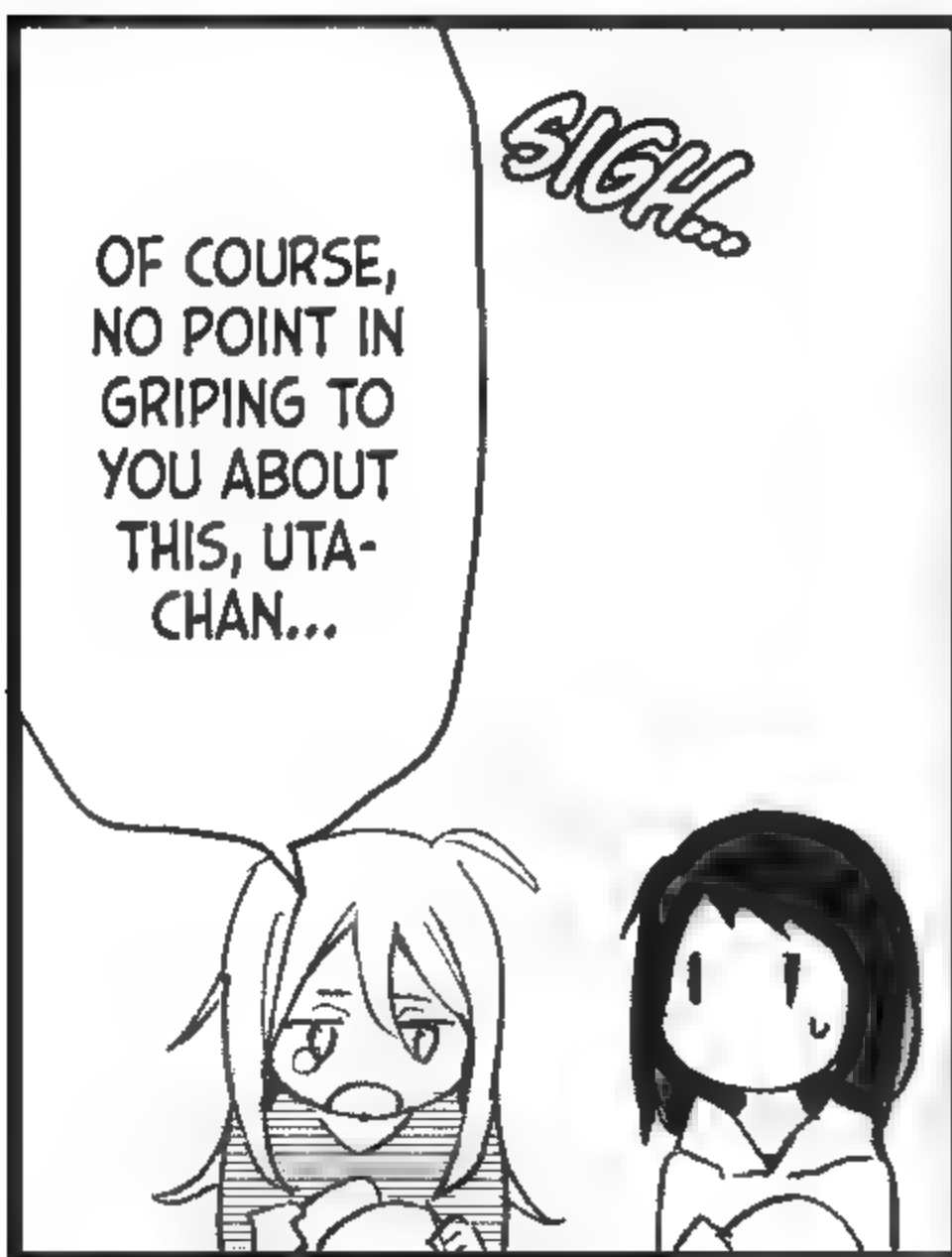
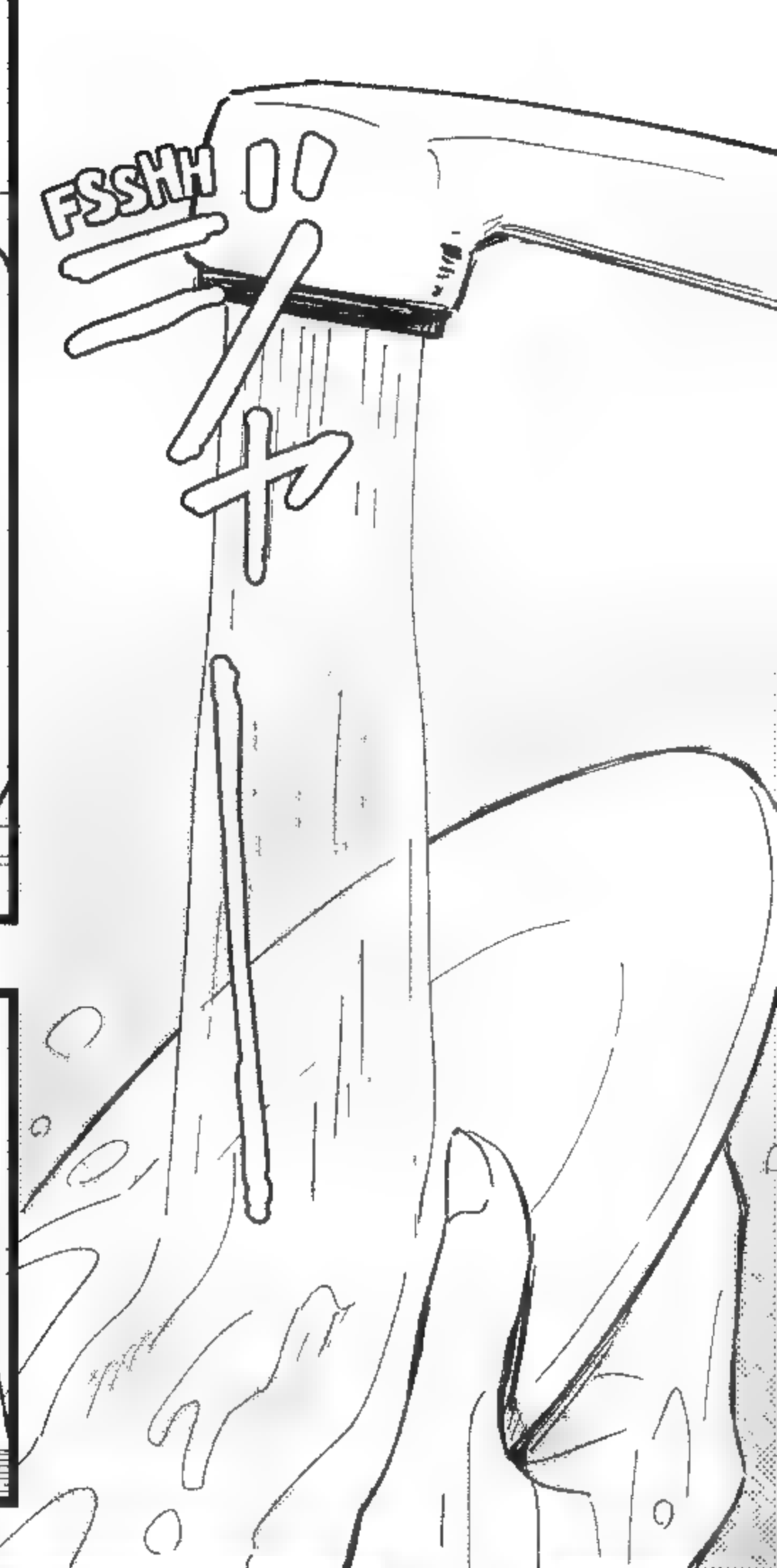
N...NO,
I THINK THAT'S
SOMETHING
NORMAL TO
GET ANGRY
ABOUT...

...SORRY FOR
MAKING THINGS
WEIRD DURING
DINNERTIME...

BROTHER CURRENTLY IN BATH



I SHOULD
SAY SORRY
THAT MY
BROTHER'S
SO INCON-
SIDERATE.



OF COURSE,
NO POINT IN
GRIPING TO
YOU ABOUT
THIS, UTA-
CHAN...

SIGH...

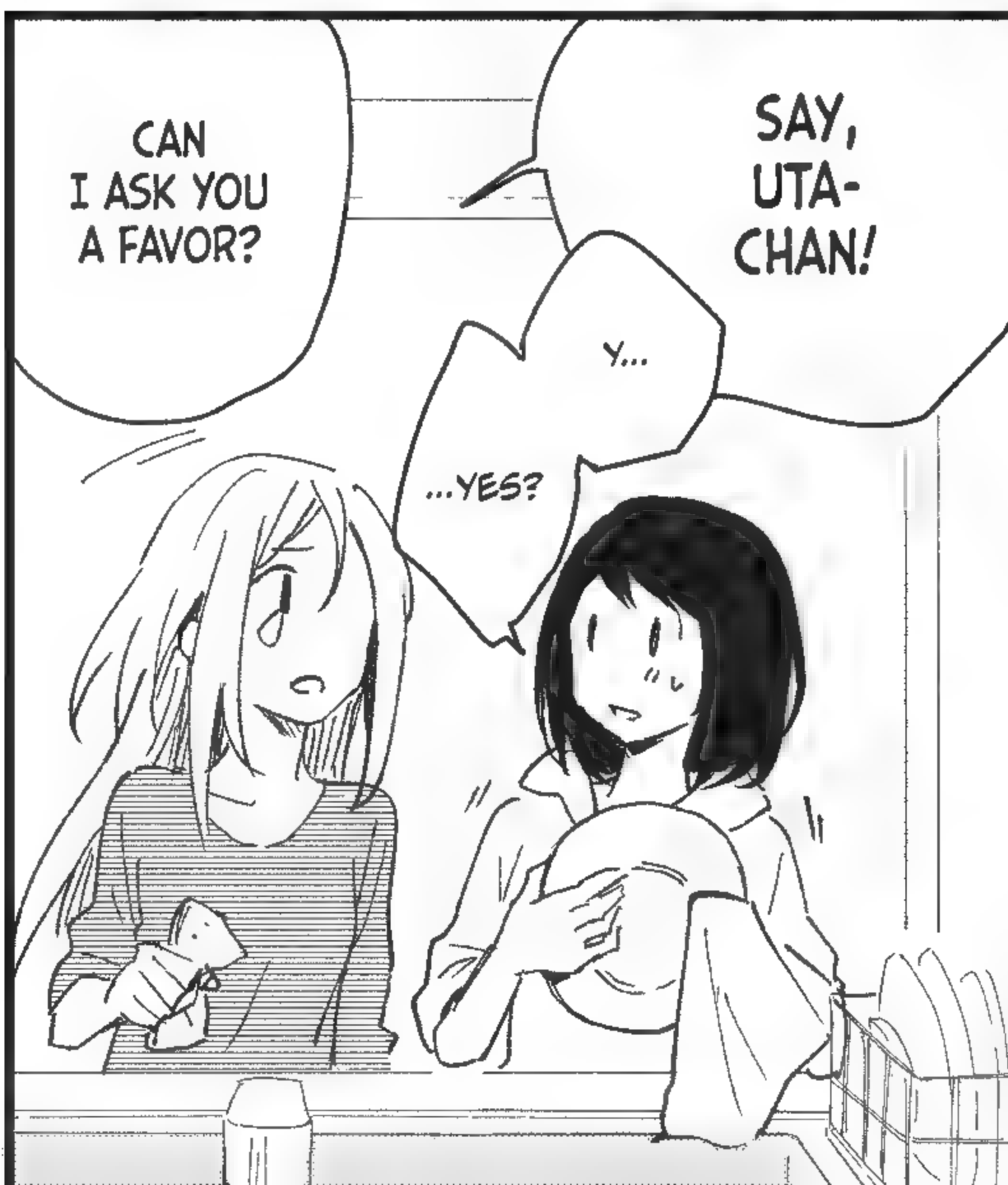


...BUT
FOR HIM TO
NEGLECT EVEN
OUR FIRST WEDDING
ANNIVERSARY,
TOO...

I KNEW
FROM THE
START THAT HE
DIDN'T SWEAT
THE DETAILS,
AND THAT HE
WAS PRETTY
BUSY WITH
WORK...

...REIICHI-KUN'S
BEEN DOING
THIS KIND OF
THING MORE
AND MORE
LATELY...

...I
GUESS, BUT
IT'S MORE
LIKE...



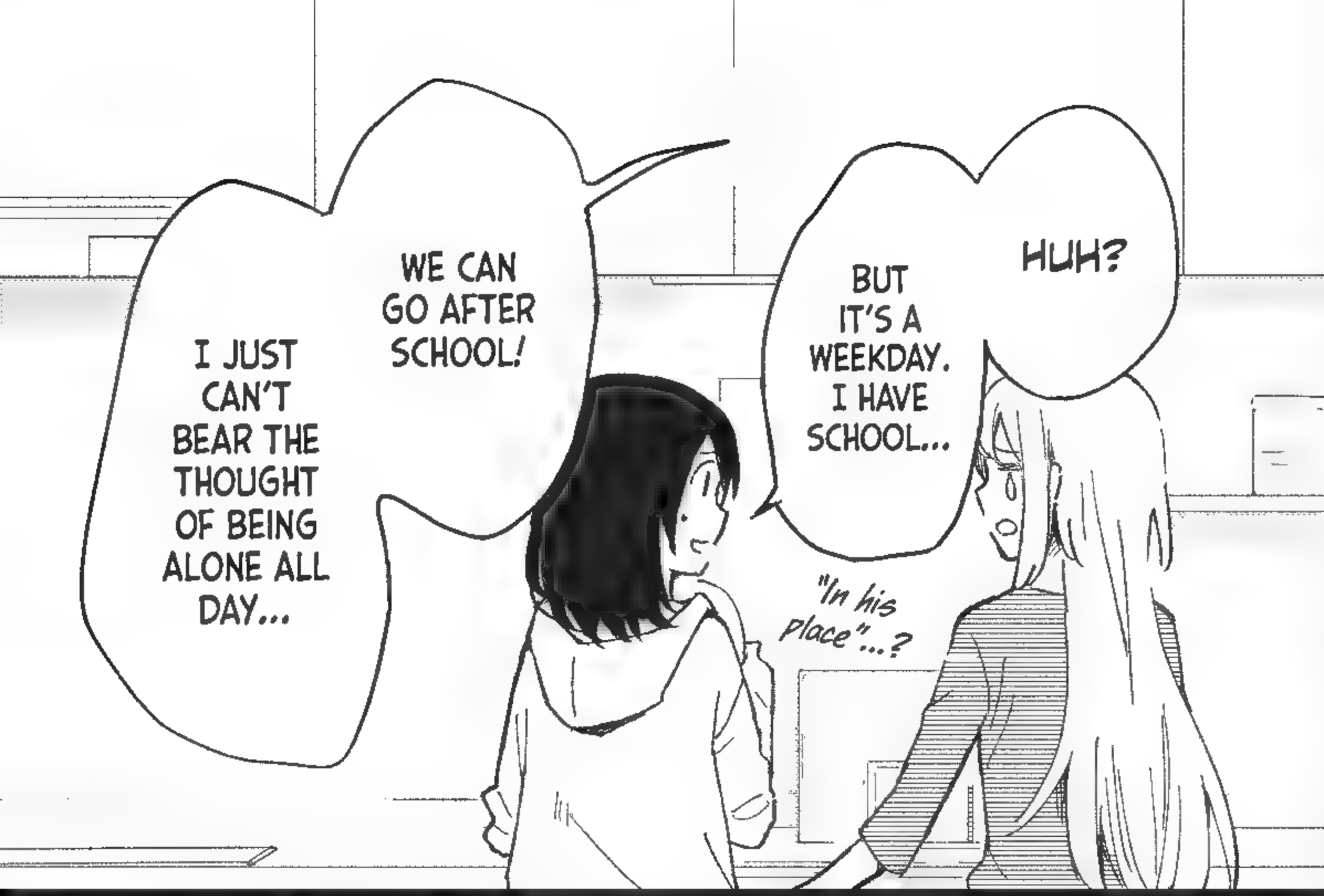
CAN
I ASK YOU
A FAVOR?

SAY,
UTA-
CHAN!

Y...

...YES?





I JUST CAN'T BEAR THE THOUGHT OF BEING ALONE ALL DAY...

WE CAN GO AFTER SCHOOL!

BUT IT'S A WEEKDAY. I HAVE SCHOOL...

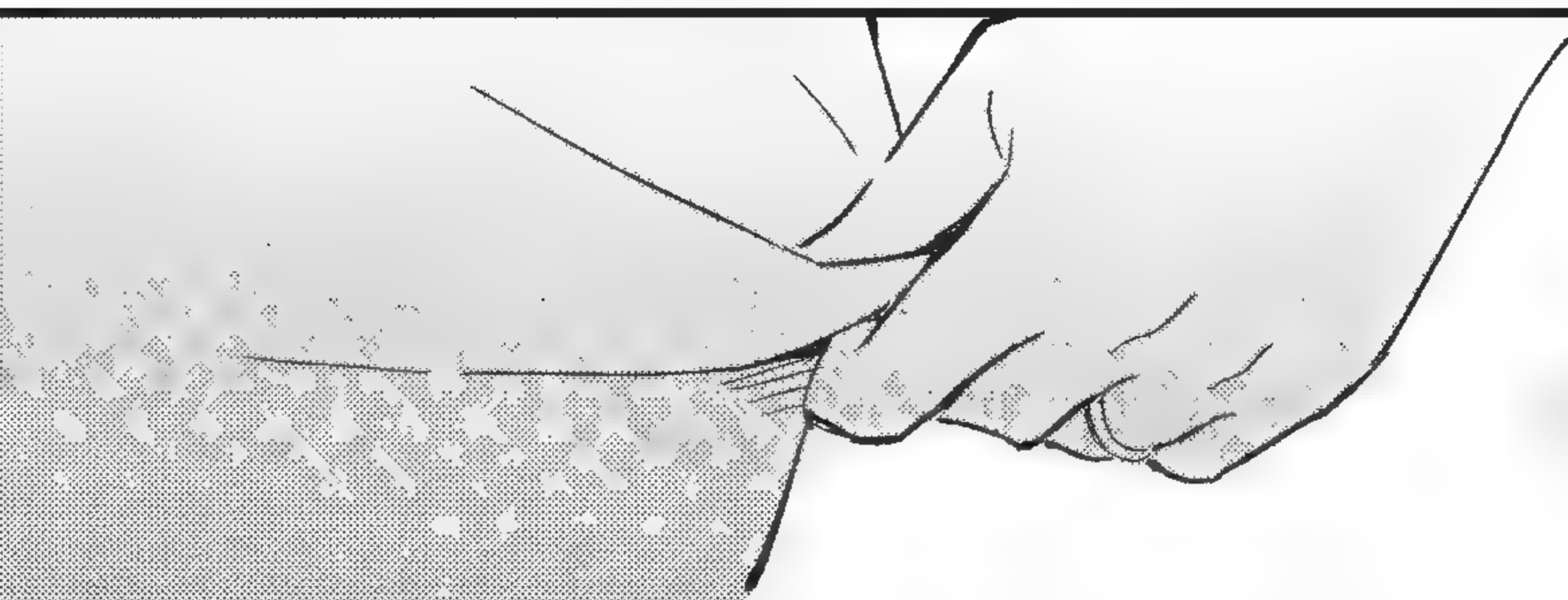
HUH?

"In his place"...?



...GO OUT WITH ME IN HIS PLACE!

ON OUR ANNIVERSARY...



...PLEASE?

TICKETS

IT'S
EXCITING
NO MATTER
HOW OLD
YOU GET!

WHOA,
I HAVEN'T
BEEN TO AN
AMUSEMENT
PARK IN
AGES!

HE ACTUALLY
JUST CAN'T
HANDLE THE
RIDES.

HE
REFUSES
TO GO!
SAYS
HE HATES
STANDING
IN LINES.

YOU
HAVEN'T
BEEN WITH
REI-KUN?

RIIIGHT?

I know.

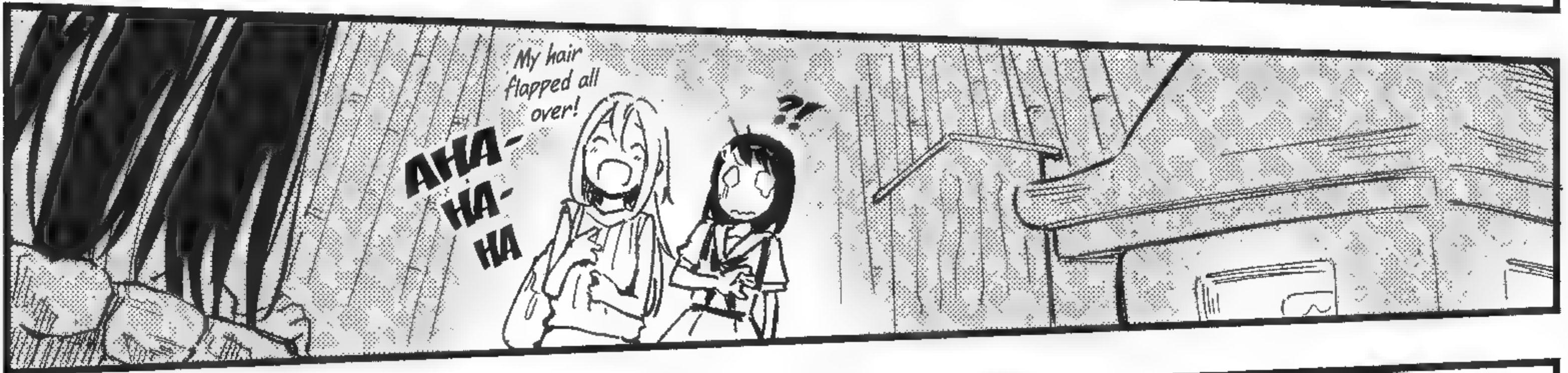
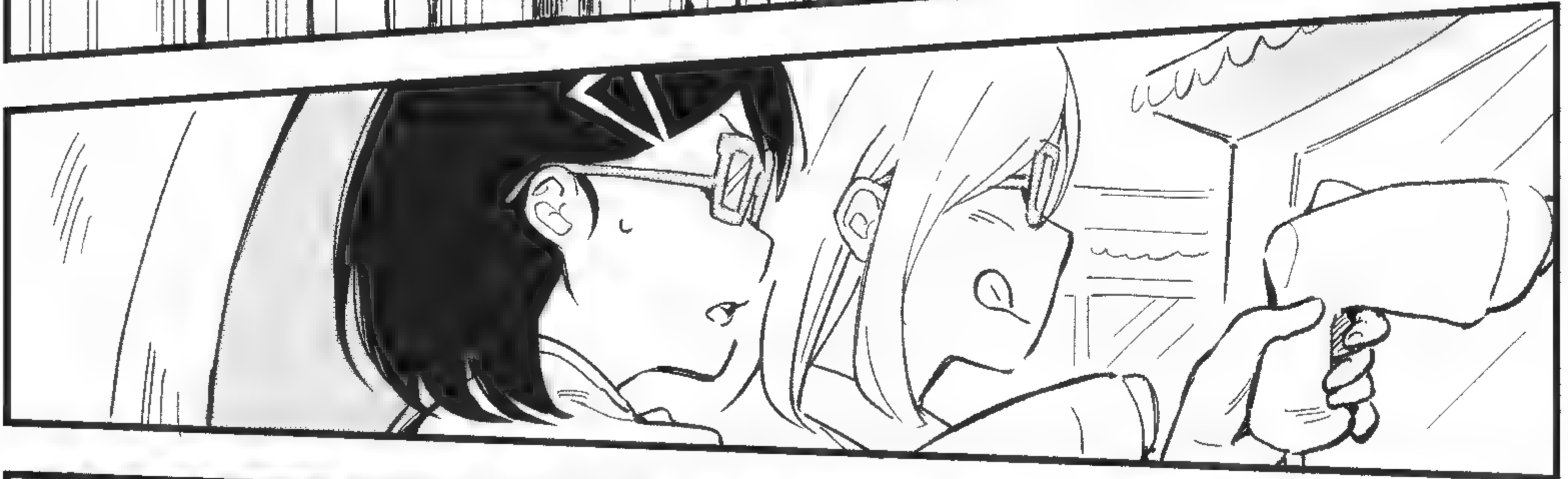
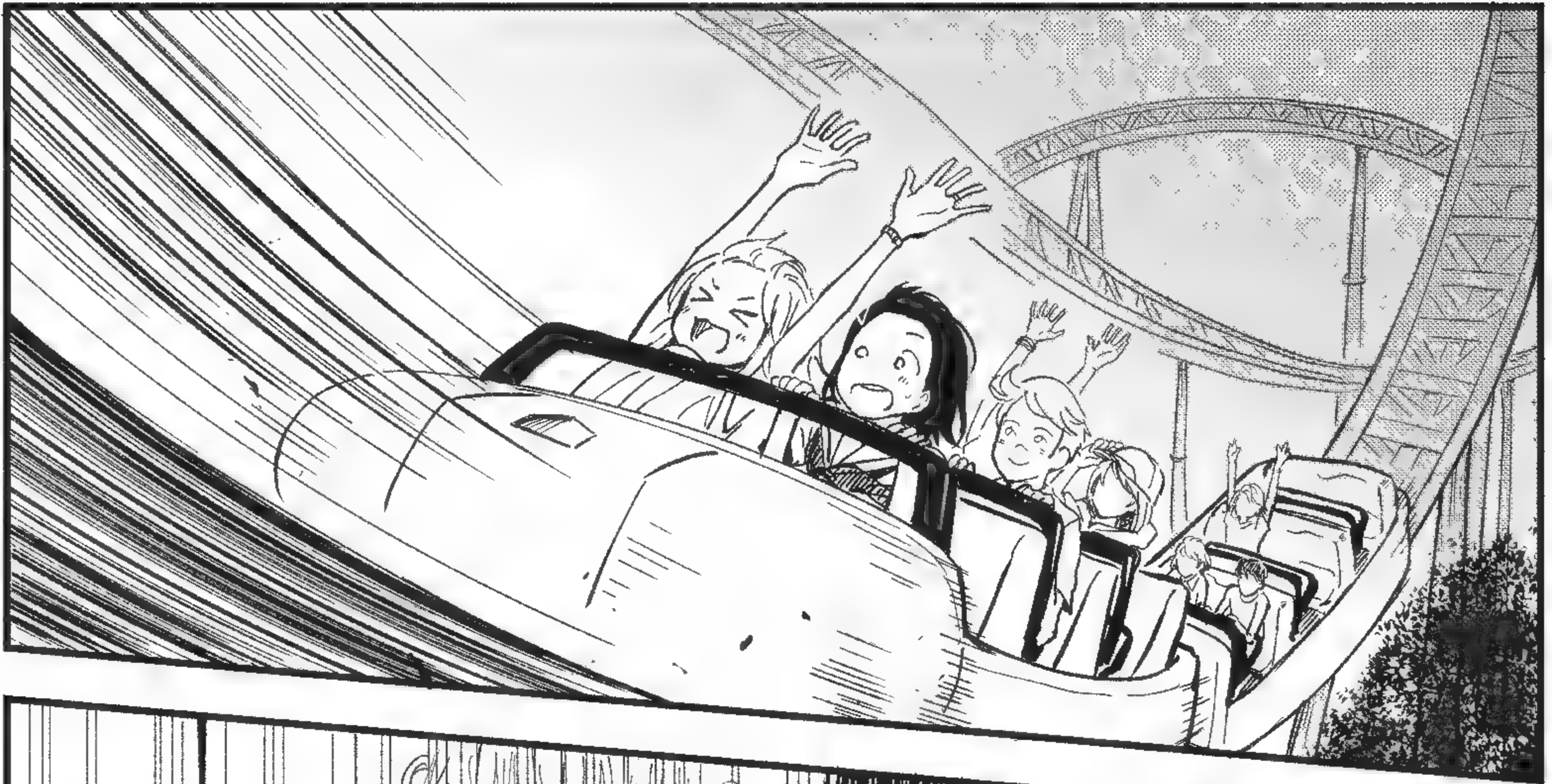
Huh?!

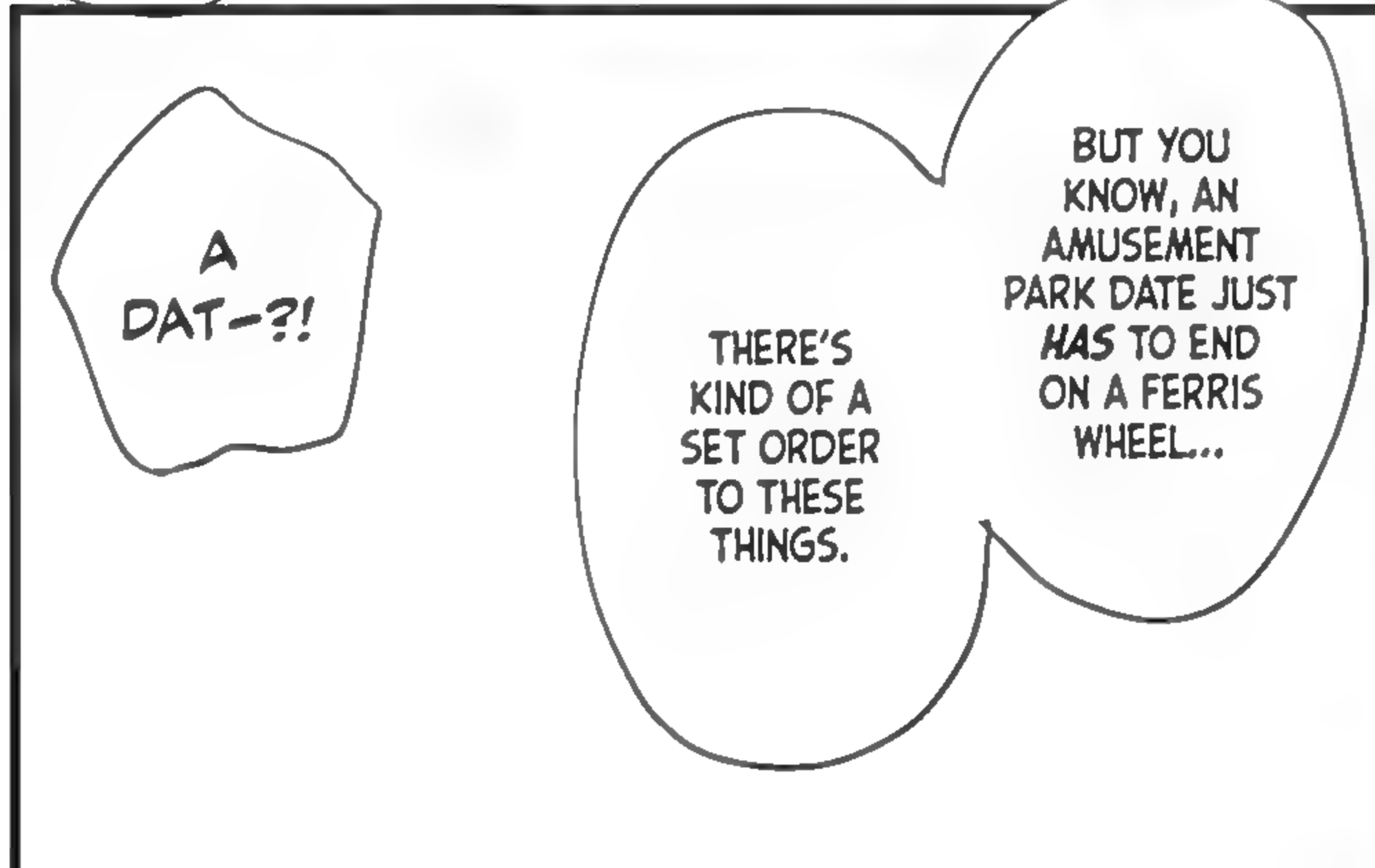
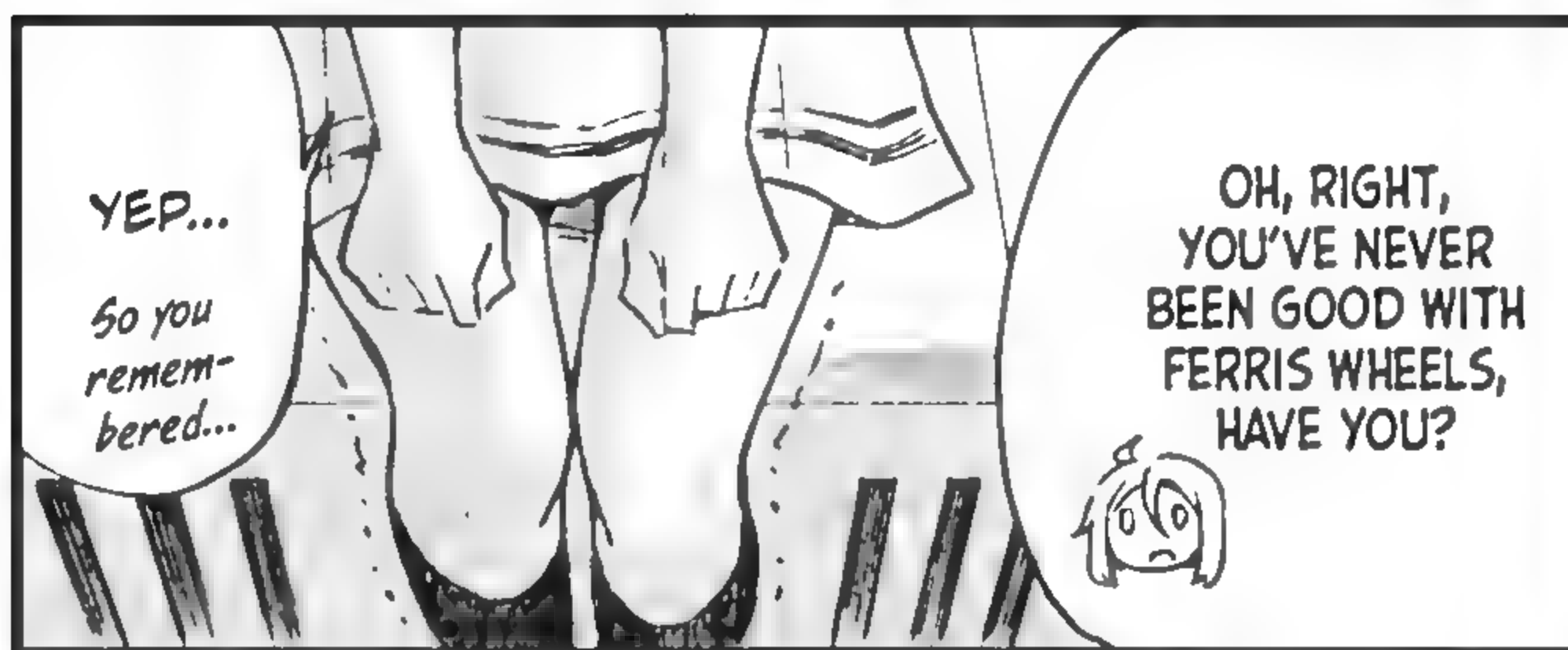
OH,
GOOD!
♥
THEN I'M
GONNA DRAG
YOU TO
ALL OF
THEM!

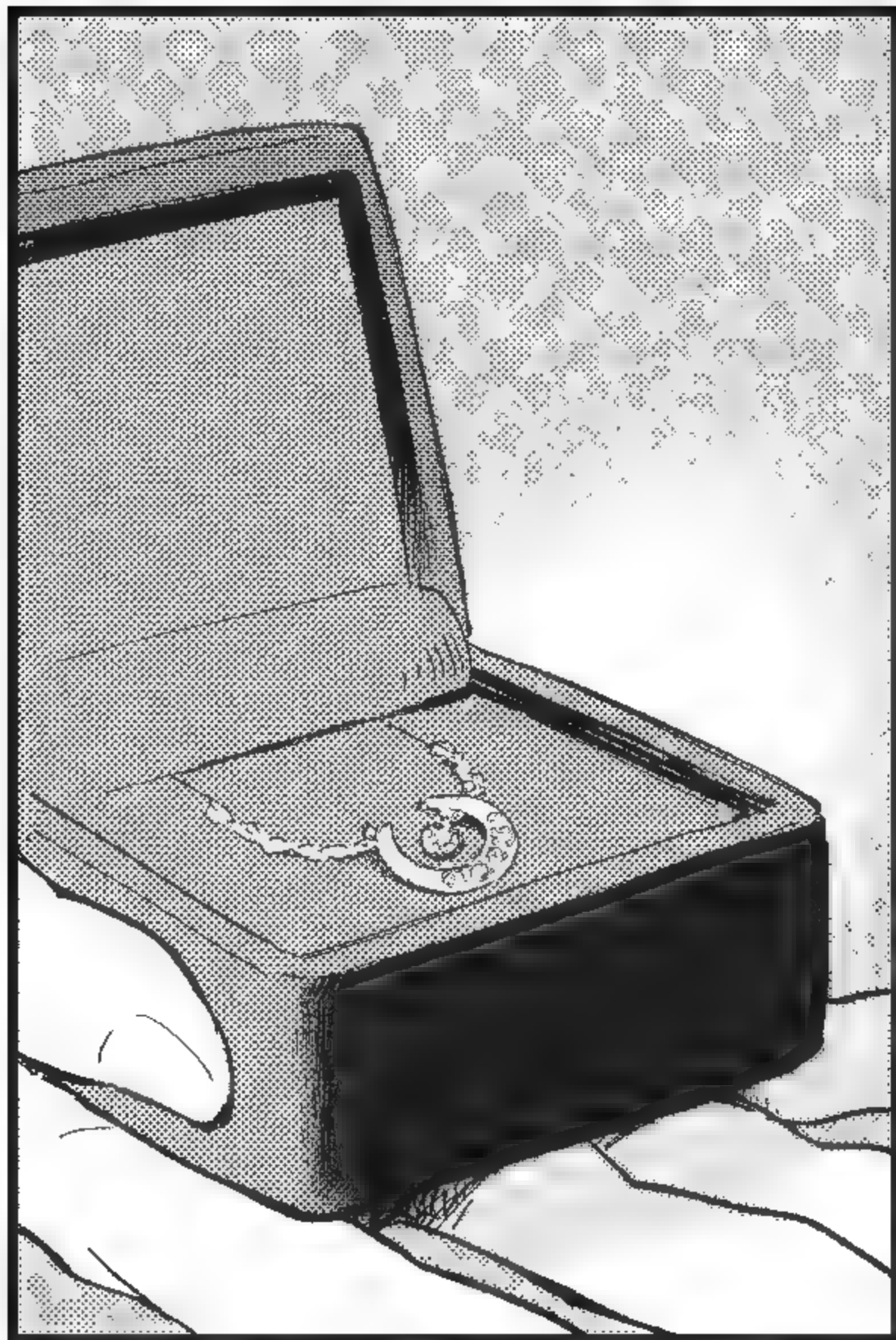
WELL,
USUALLY...

*More
than Rei-
kun.*

YOU'RE
OKAY WITH
THEM, RIGHT,
UTA-CHAN?







ALSO...

THERE'S
SOMETHING
I WANTED TO
GIVE YOU, AS
THANKS
FOR TODAY.

SO SHE WAS
AWARE THIS WAS
LIKE A DATE.

*Crap, it's
making me
smile.*

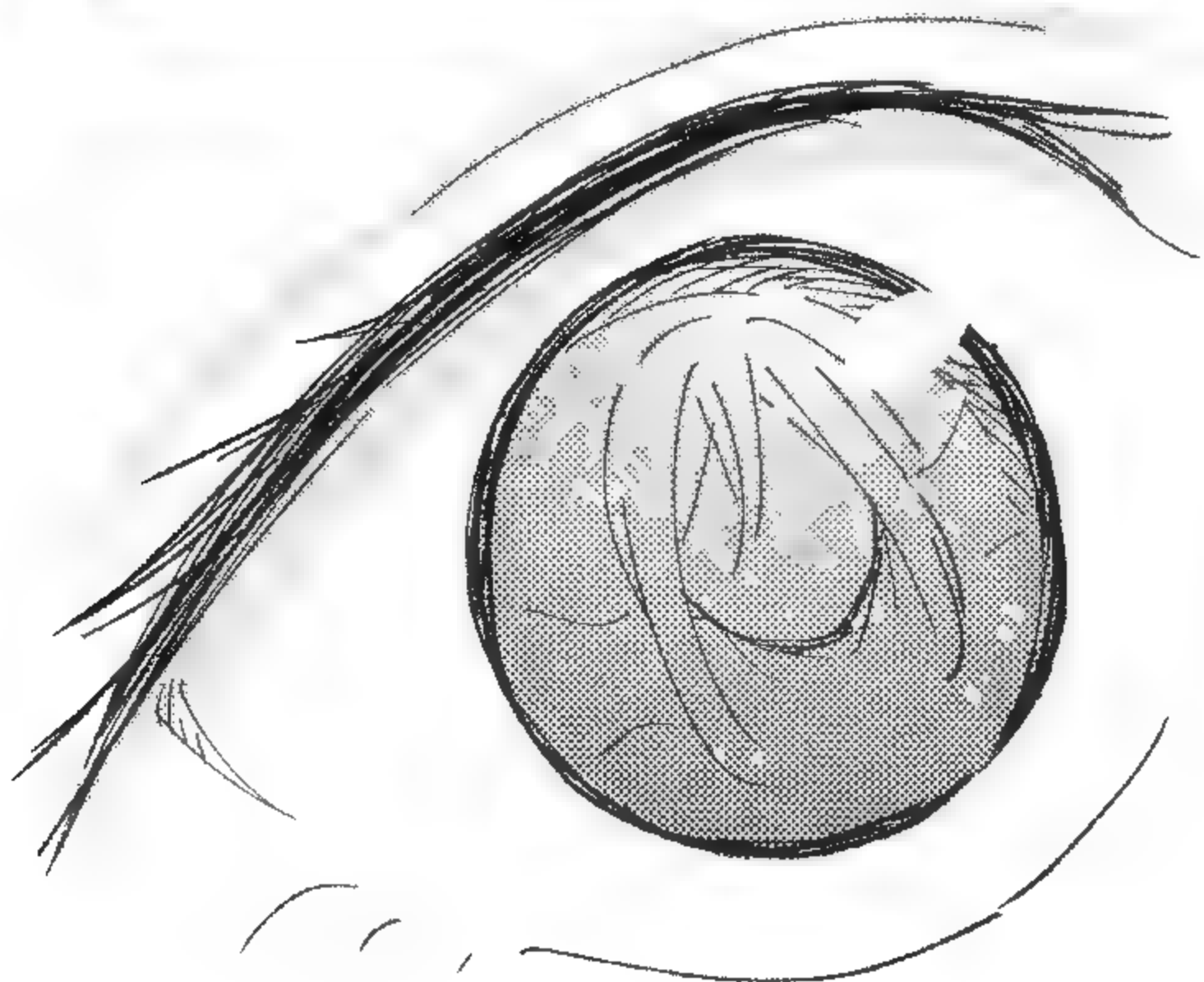


YEP.

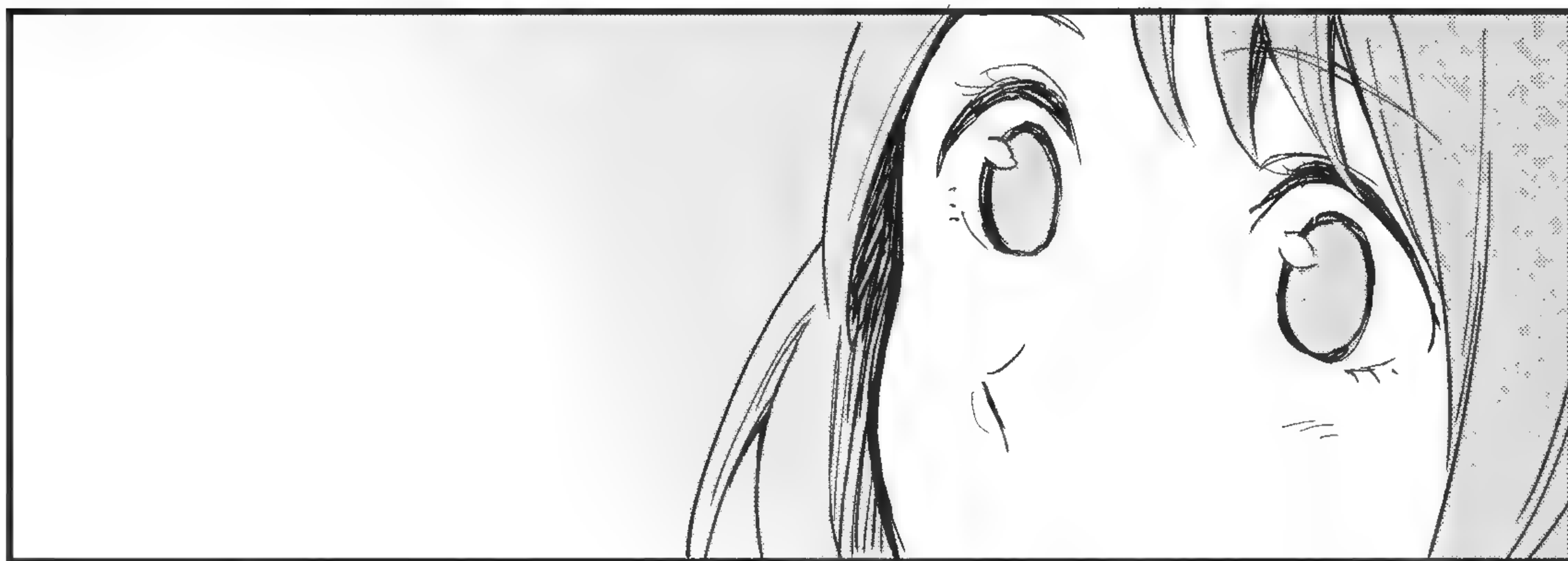
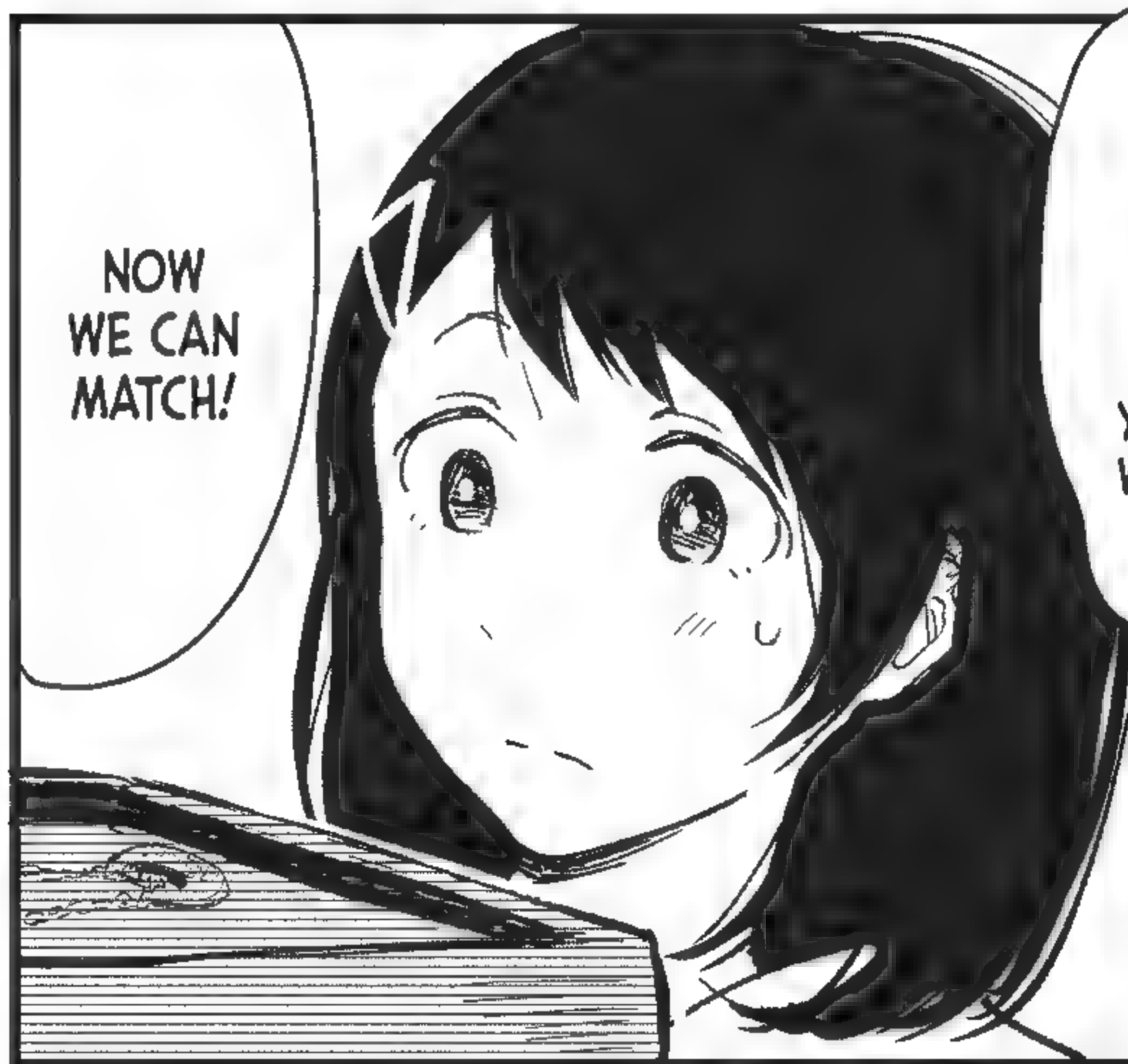
...A
NECK-
LACE?



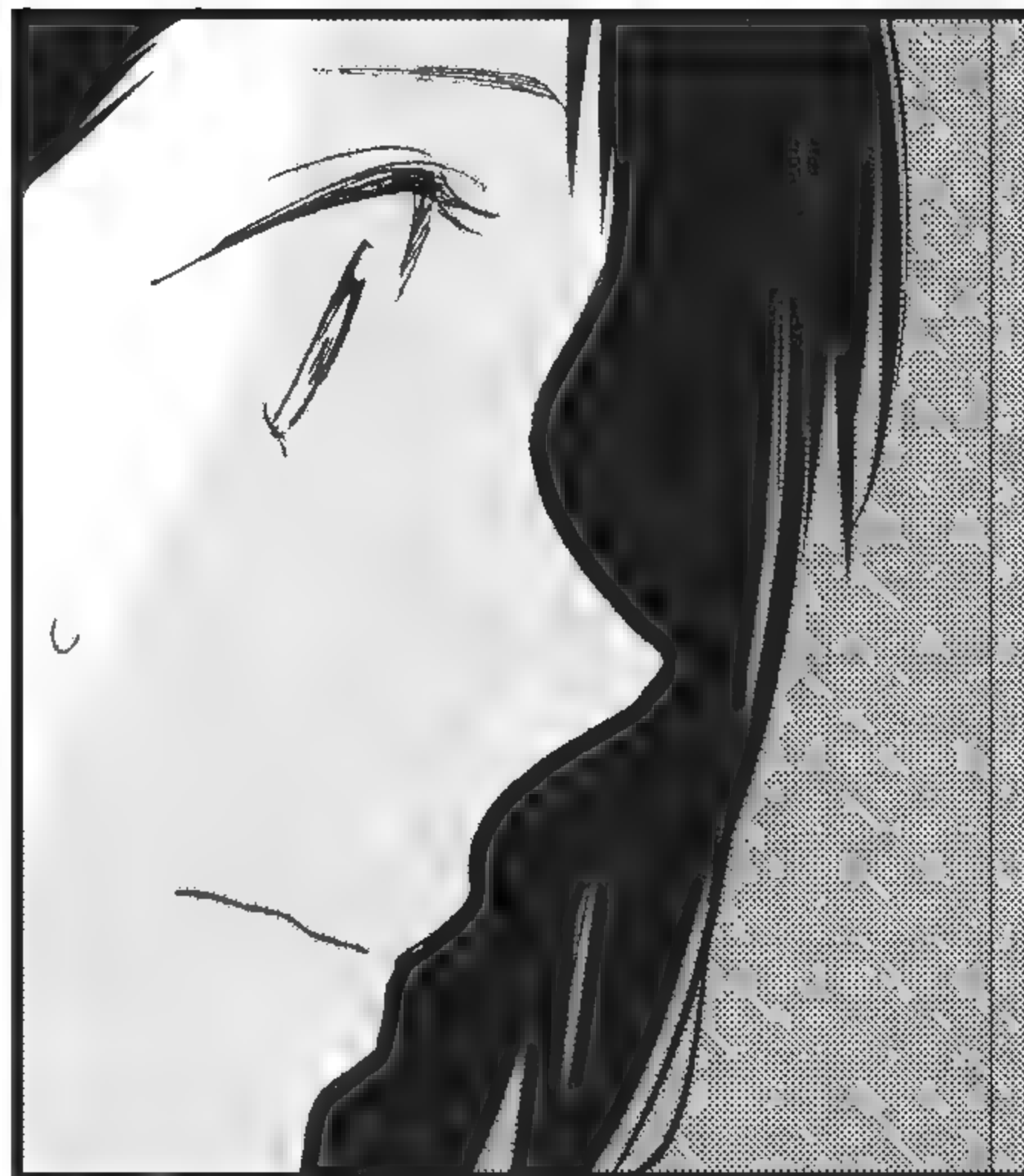
IT'S A
PRESENT
FOR YOU,
UTA-CHAN.











PLEASE
DON'T WORRY
YOURSELF SO
MUCH OVER
ME AND HIM.

IT'S
OKAY FOR
YOU TO RELY
ON ME MORE,
LIKE YOU USED
TO, OKAY?



YEAH...
THANK
YOU...

HONESTLY,
I WISH
WE COULD
JUST GO
BACK TO THE
WAY THINGS
USED TO BE.

WHAT
DO
I DO?

HER
KINDNESS
IS LIKE A
KNIFE...





...IF I
LET MY-
SELF FALL
FOR THAT
KIND OF
AFFECTION
NOW...

BUT...



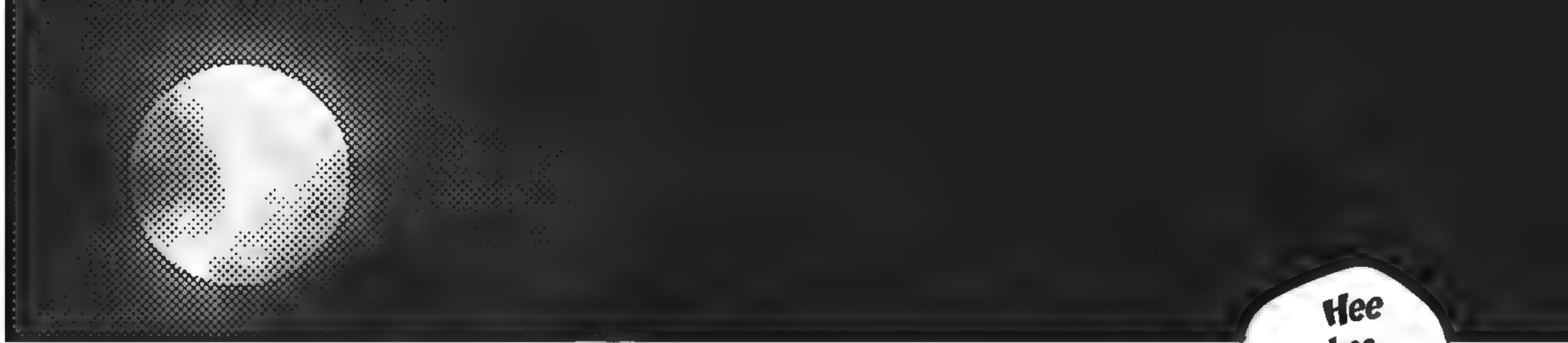
C'MON.

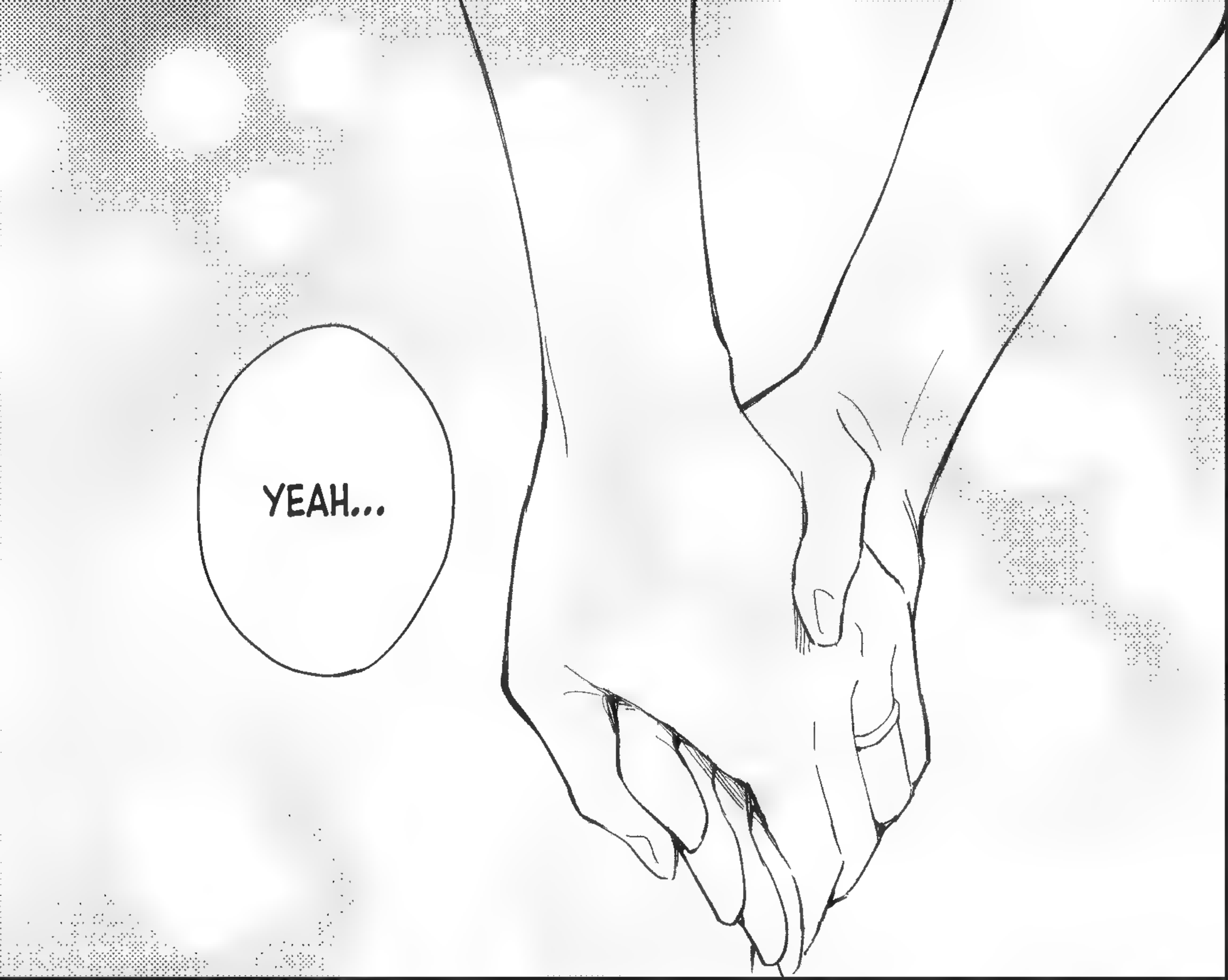
LET'S
GO
HOME!

It's
about
to go
around
again.



...THERE'D BE
NO GOING BACK.





YEAH...



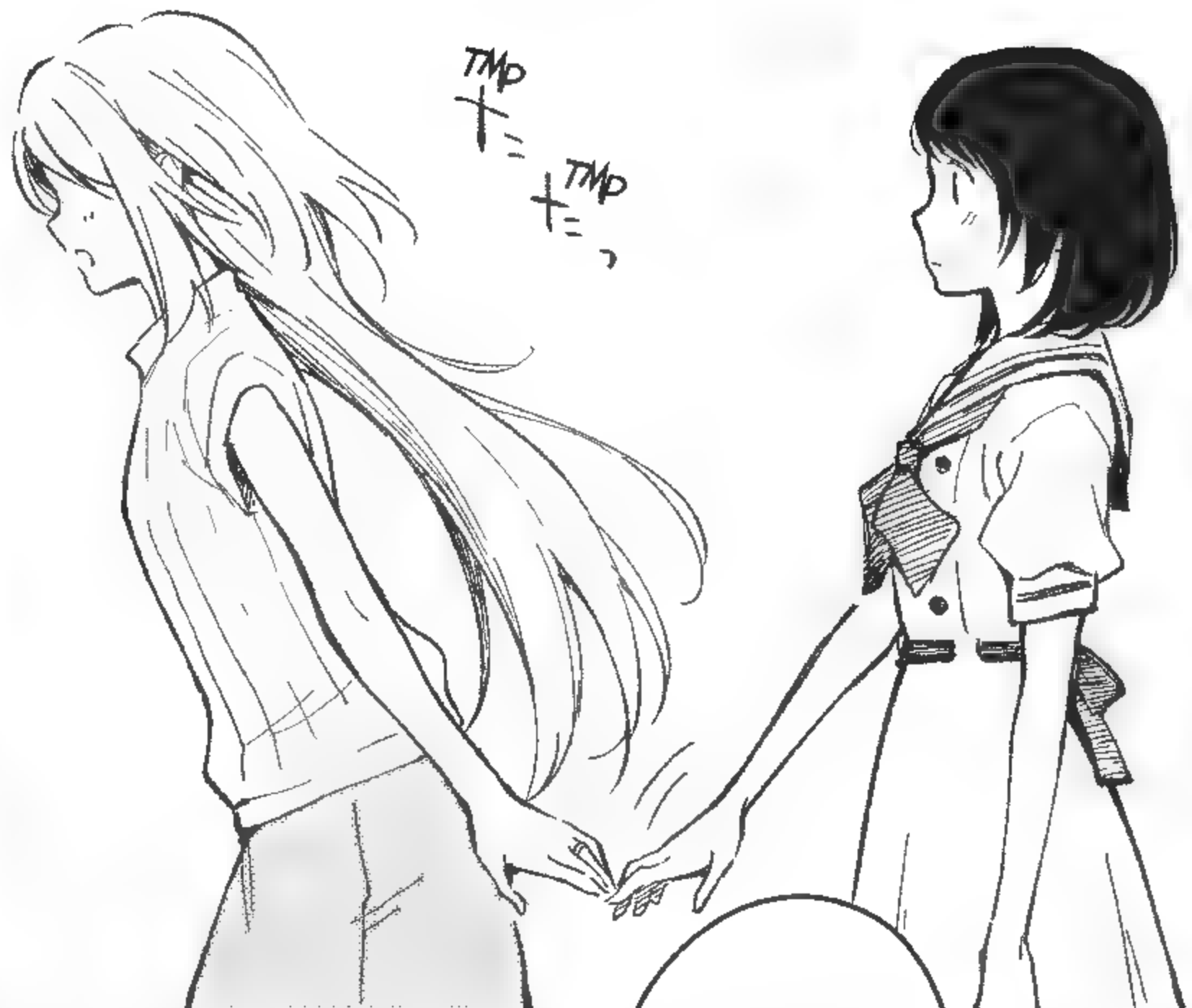
OH,
WELCOME
HOME.

GA-
CHAK

カ
チ
ン



Oh!
REIICHI-
KUN!



WHAT
DO YOU
THINK
OF THIS
PLACE?

*It sounds
pretty good.*

I'LL TAKE
YOU OUT
SOMEWHERE
TOMORROW,
INSTEAD.

Oww!

PINCH



WHAT'S UP?
WEREN'T YOU
AWAY ON
BUSINESS?
WHAT ARE
YOU DOING
HERE?!

I TOLD
THEM I
WANTED TO
AT LEAST
BE ABLE TO
CHERISH MY
WIFE ON OUR
WEDDING
ANNIVERSARY.

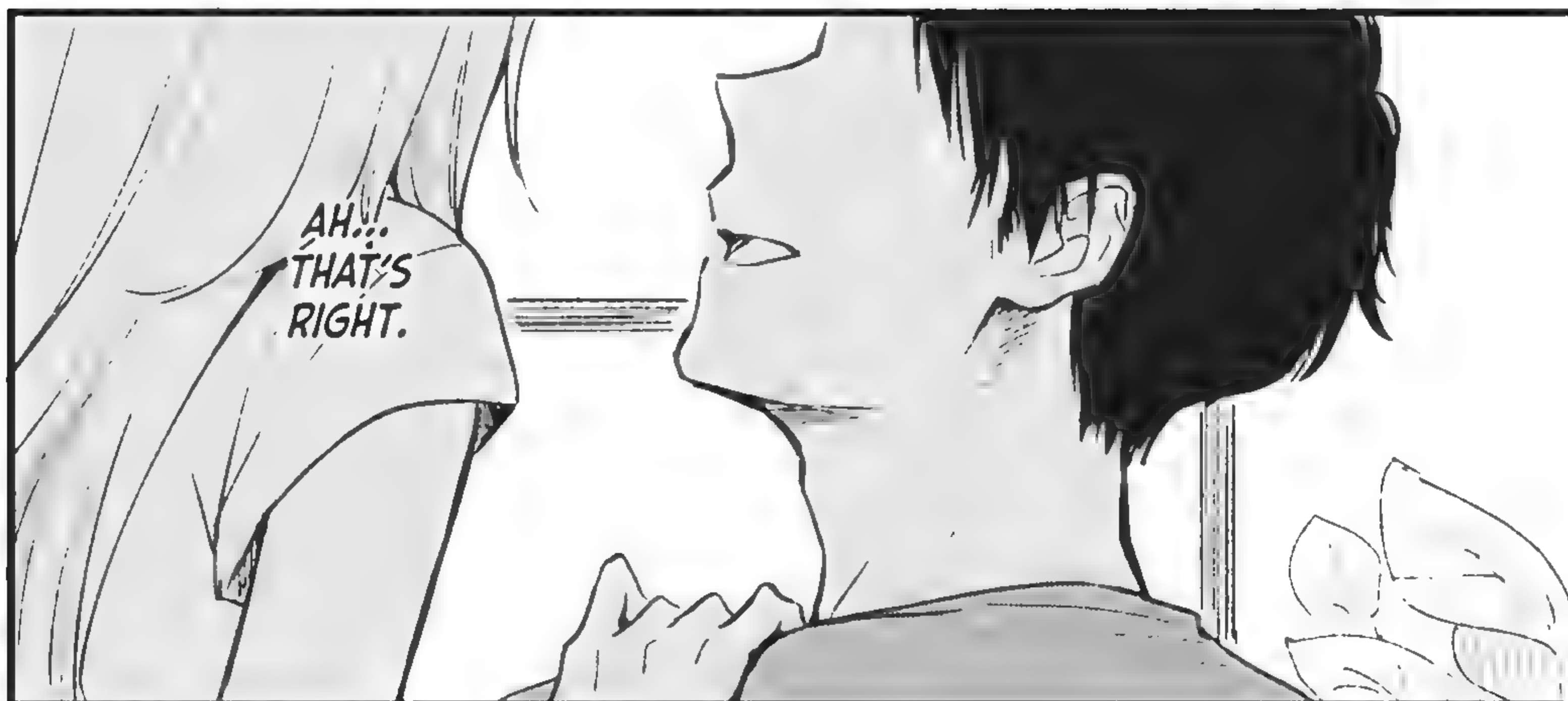
I WORKED
IT A BIT AND
MANAGED TO
GET SOME
LEEWAY.



BIG TALK FOR
SOMEONE WHO
FORGOT IT...

LOOK,
I REALLY
AM SORRY
ABOUT
THAT...

*You're
pretty full of
yourself...*



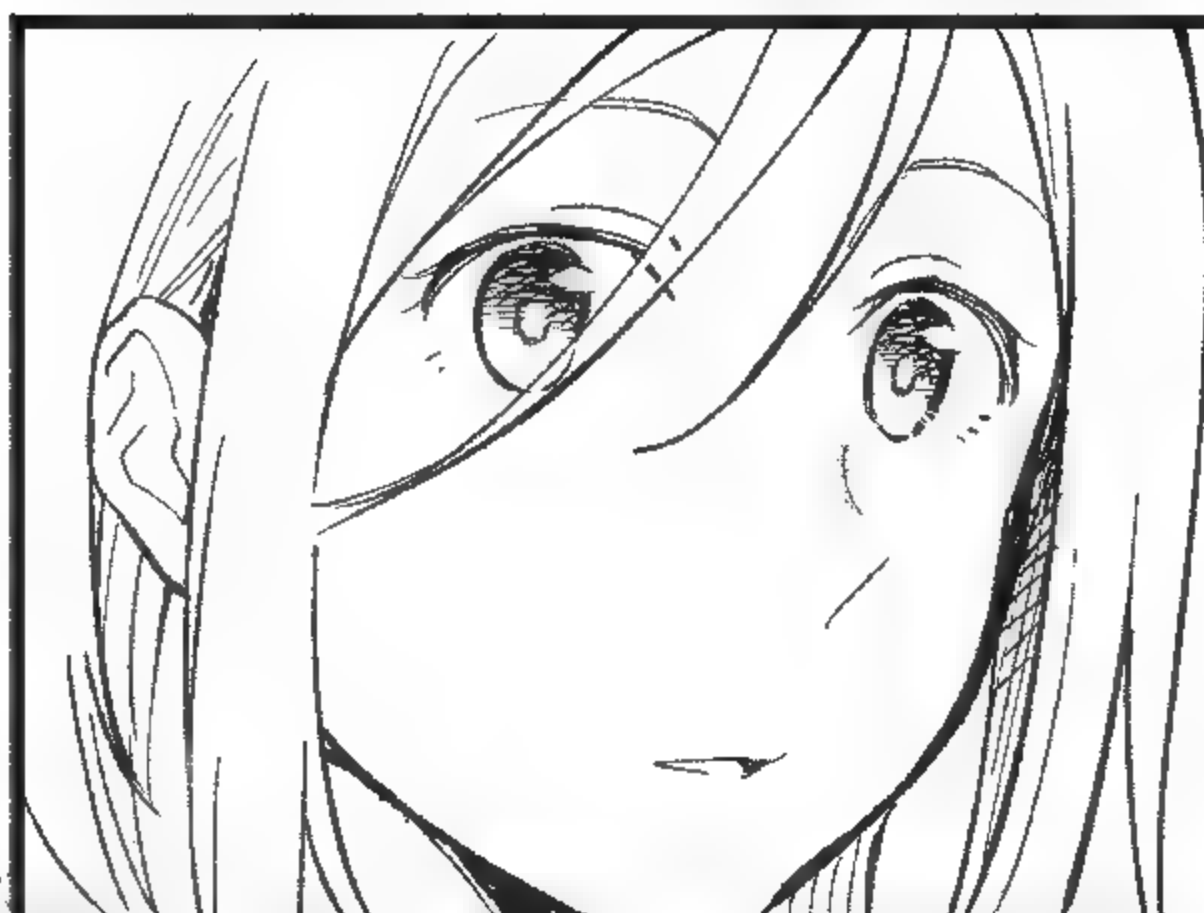


YOU
MARRIED
FOLKS
ENJOY YOUR
EVENING
WITHOUT
DISTRAC-
TIONS.

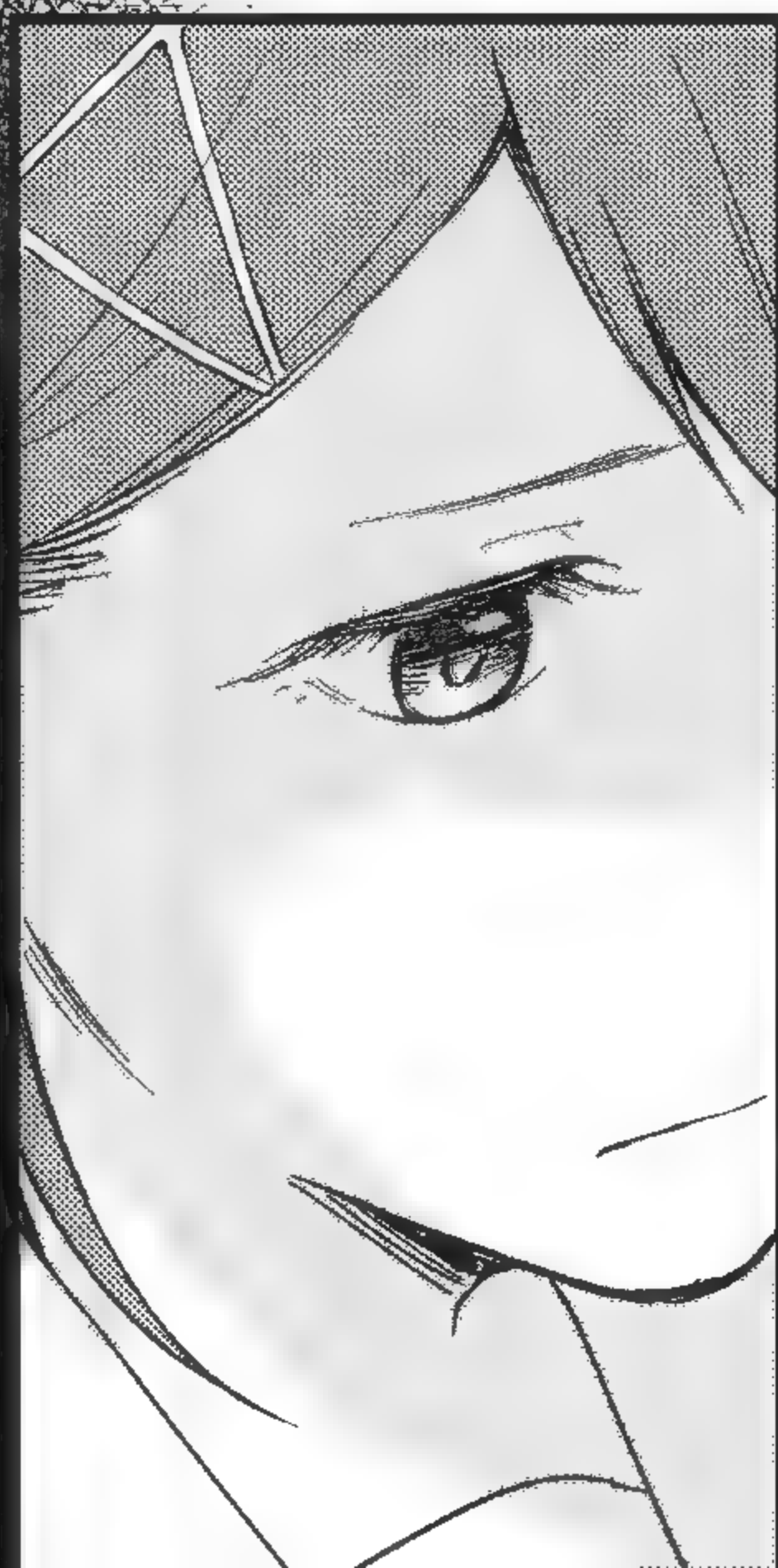


NAH.

I'LL
SIT THIS
ONE OUT.



SHUT...
110
A-1...



...I
WONDER
IF MY
SMILE
SEEMED
NATURAL
ENOUGH.



JEEZ...

THAT
SHOULD'VE
BEEN A
REGULAR,
EVERYDAY
SCENE...



...BUT
TODAY...

...I GOT
JUST A
LITTLE
TASTE...

...OF THAT
HAPPINESS...

...FROM
THE OTHER
SIDE...



A ONE-
SIDED
LOVE-
A LINE
I CAN'T
CROSS.

I KNEW
FROM THE
START THAT
THERE WAS
NO HOPE
FOR ME.



THIS
"LOVE" WAS
ABOUT PILING ON
FEELINGS FOR
SOMEONE ON THE
OTHER SIDE...

EVEN
THOUGH
SHE
WAS
ALWAYS
RIGHT
BEFORE
MY
EYES...



THAT'S THE
KIND OF LOVE
IT WAS.



I HAD
SEPARATED
MY HEART
FROM IT...

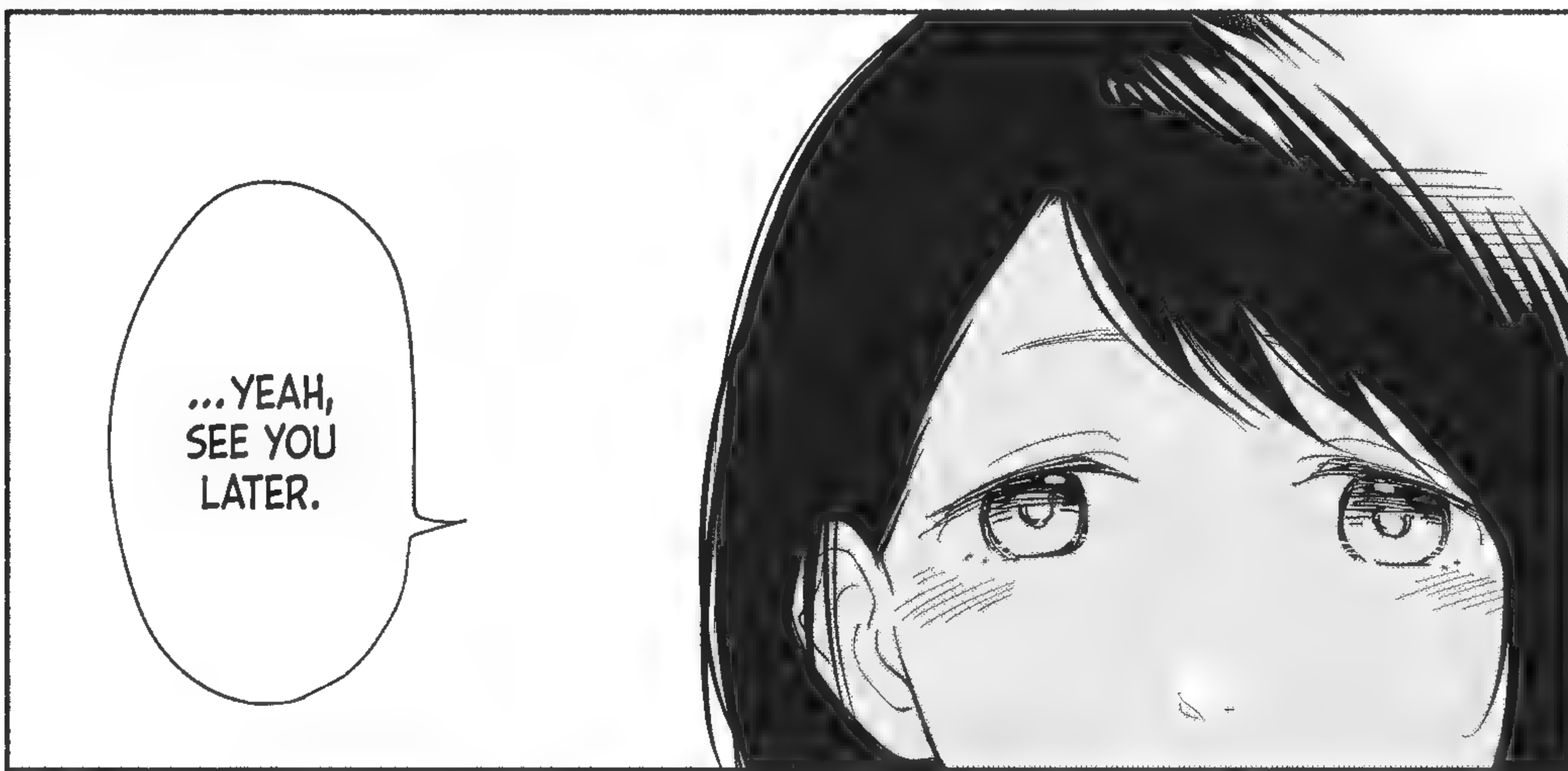
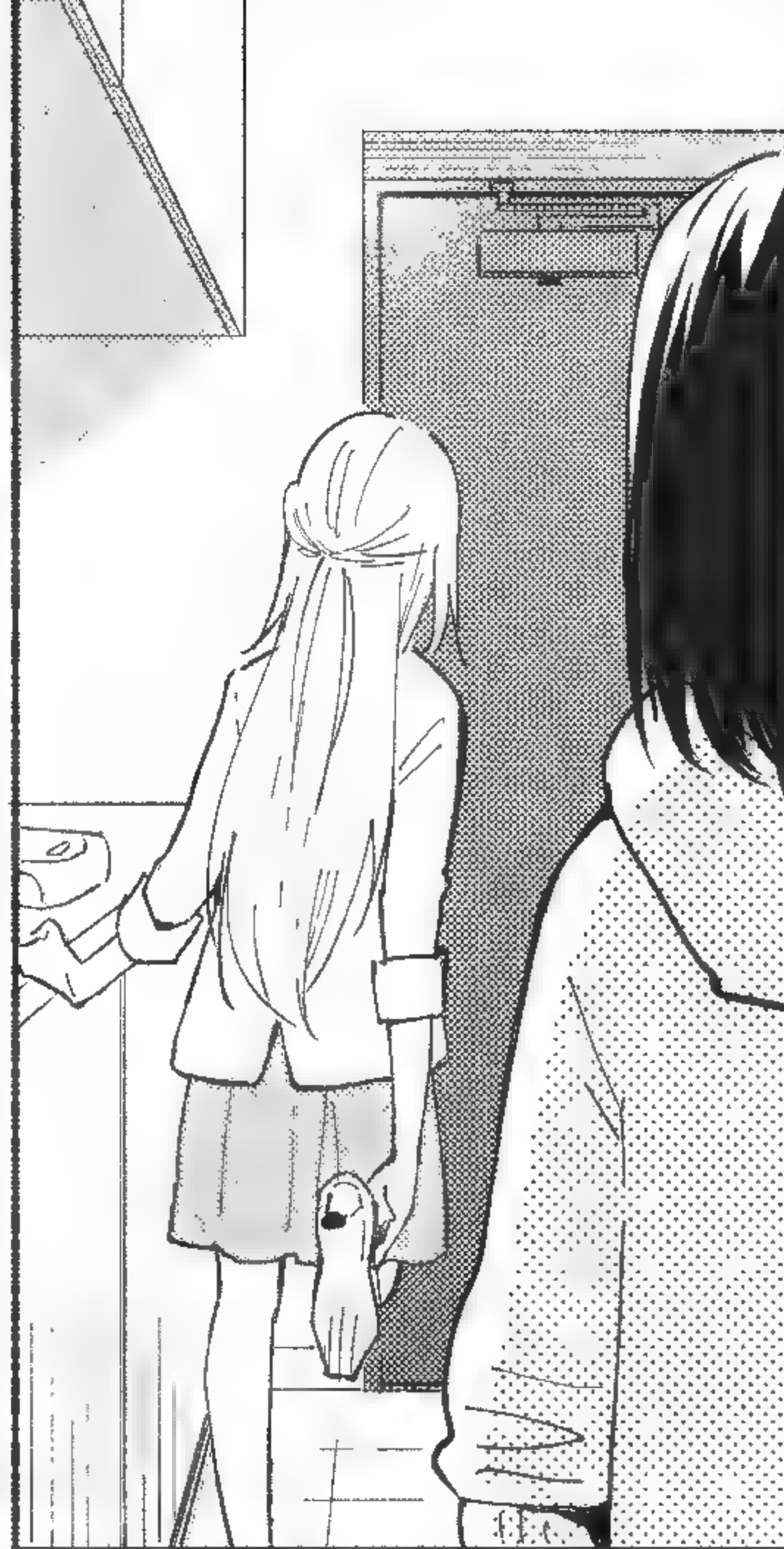


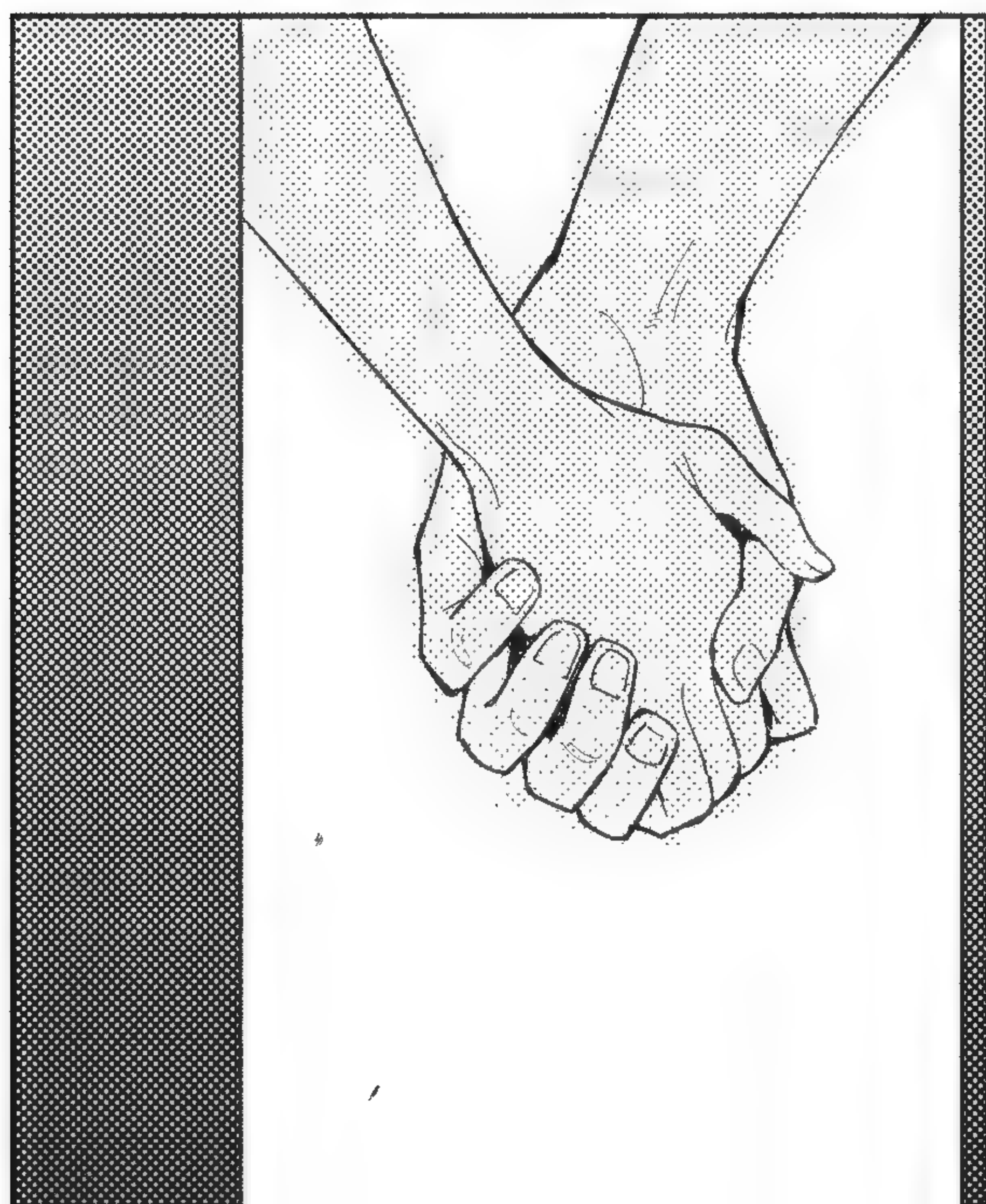
*If I Could
Reach You*

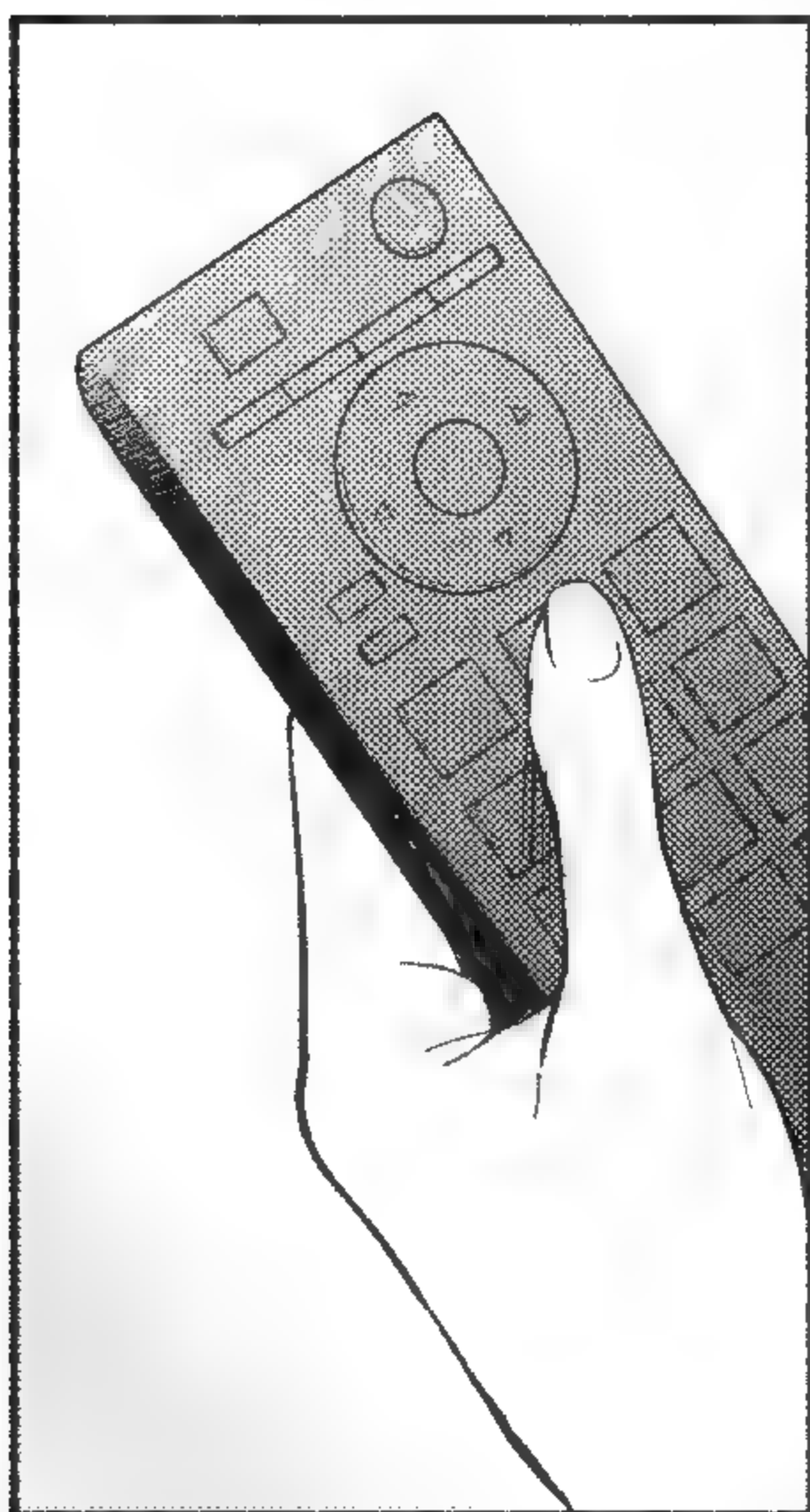
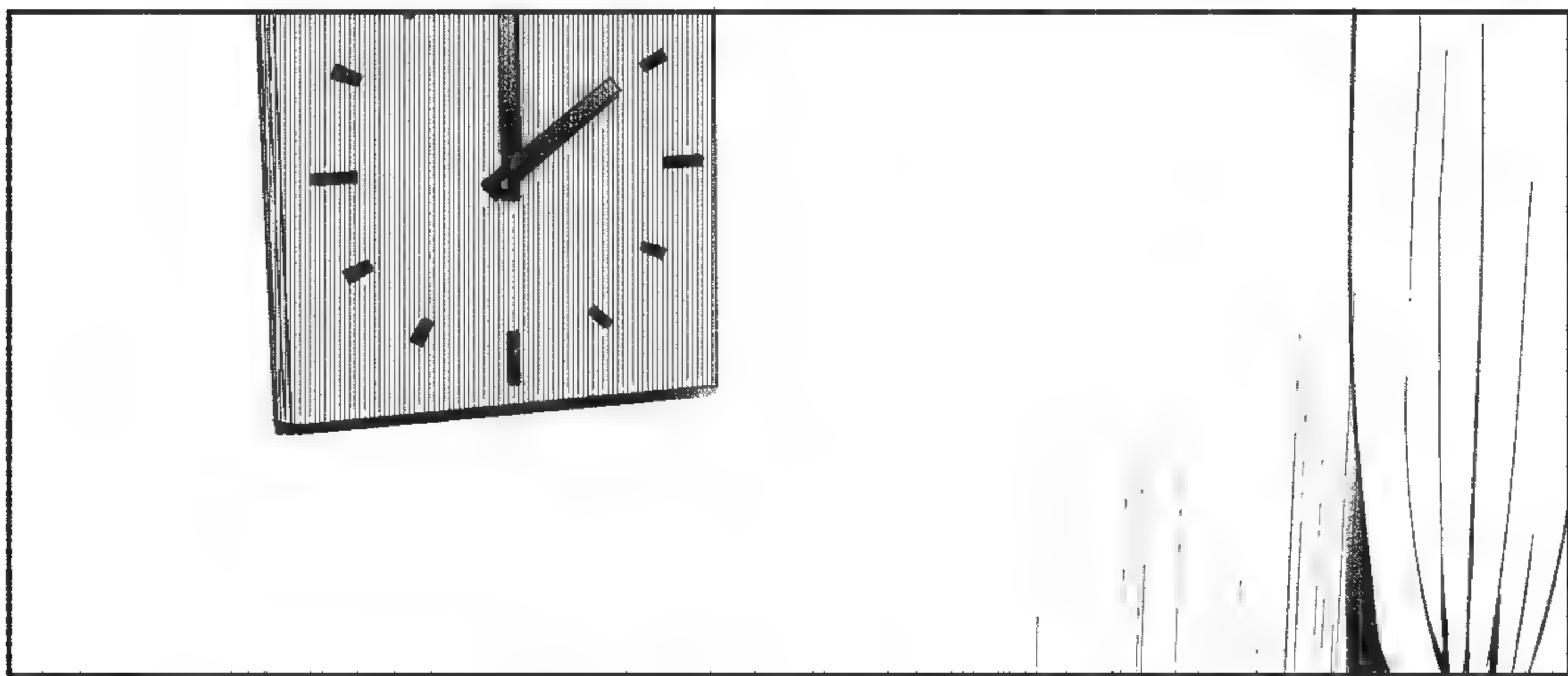
*If I Could
Reach You*

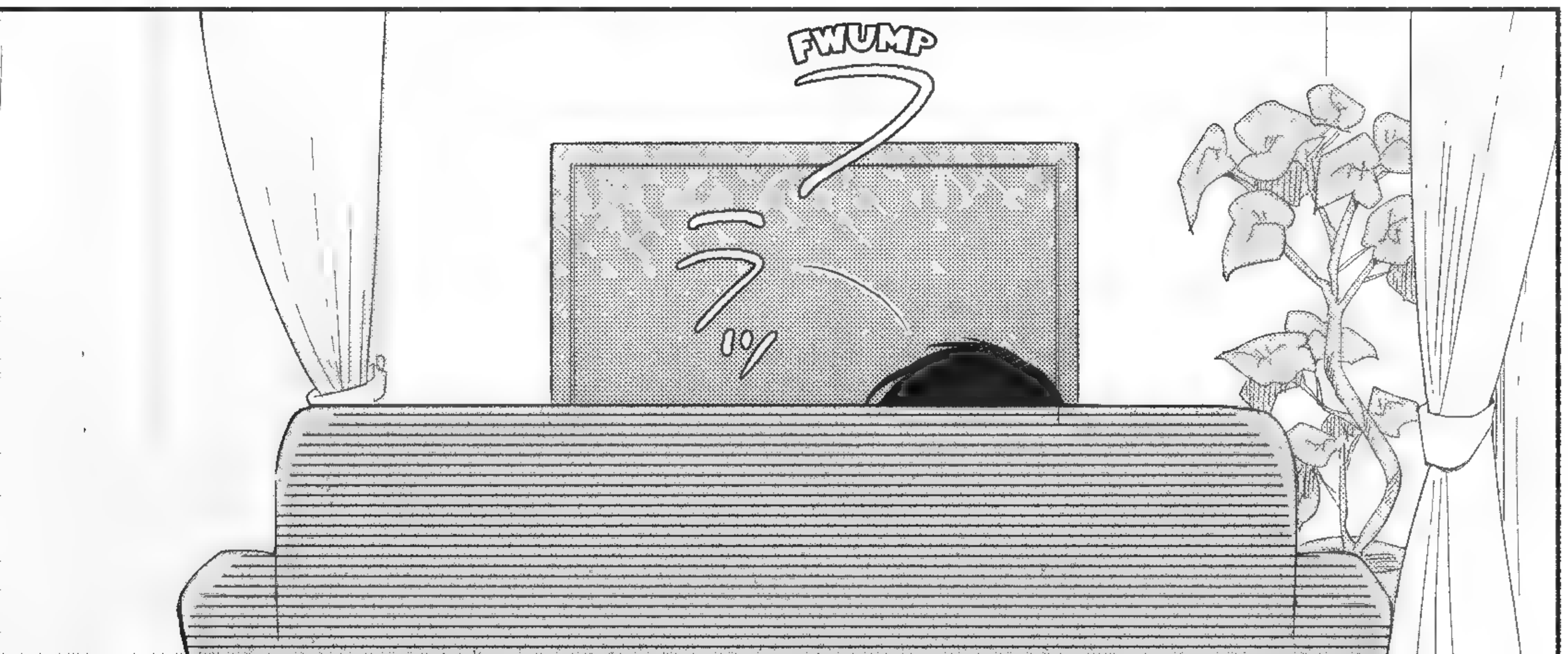
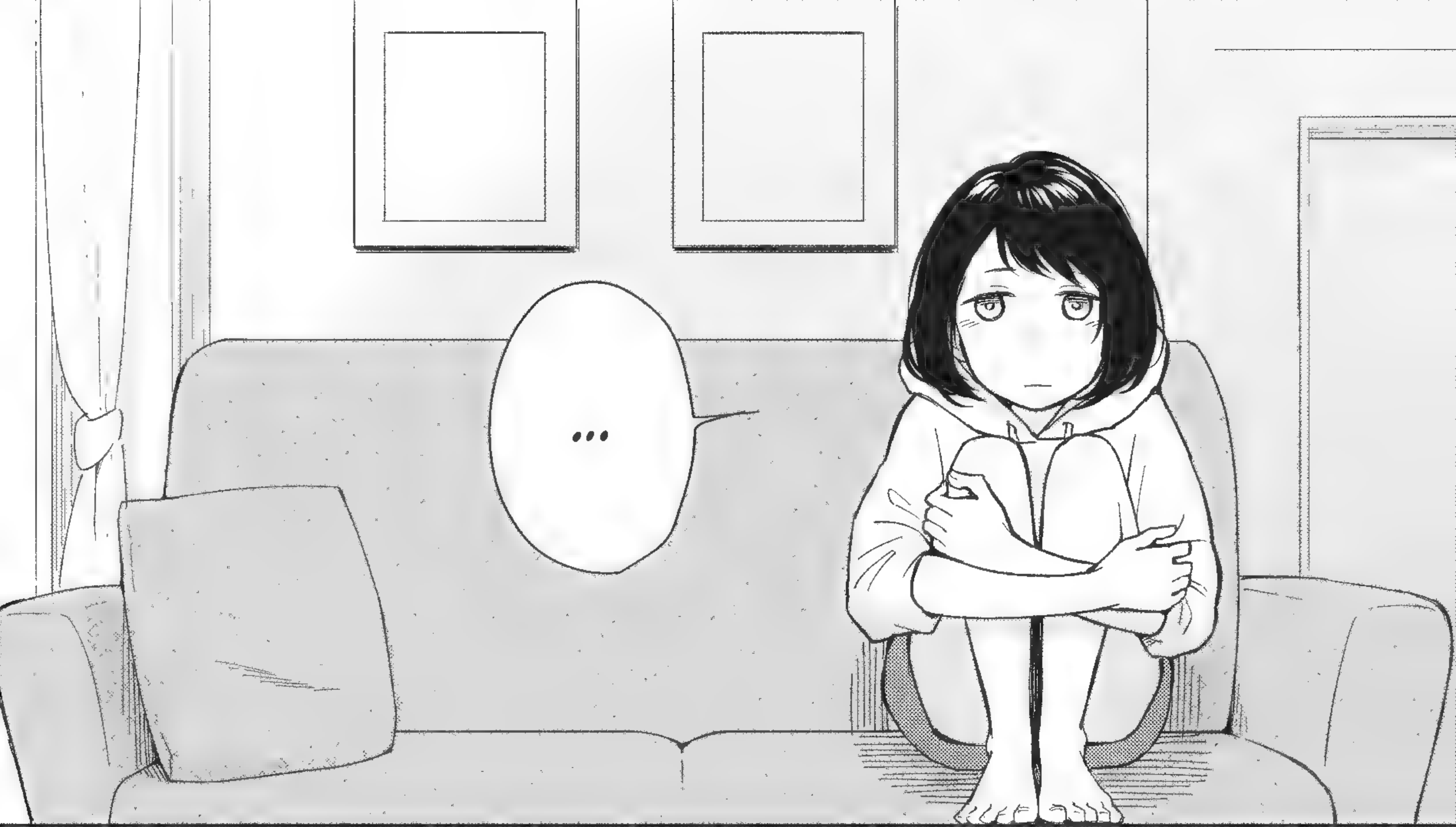


Chapter 2











IT'S
NO
USE.



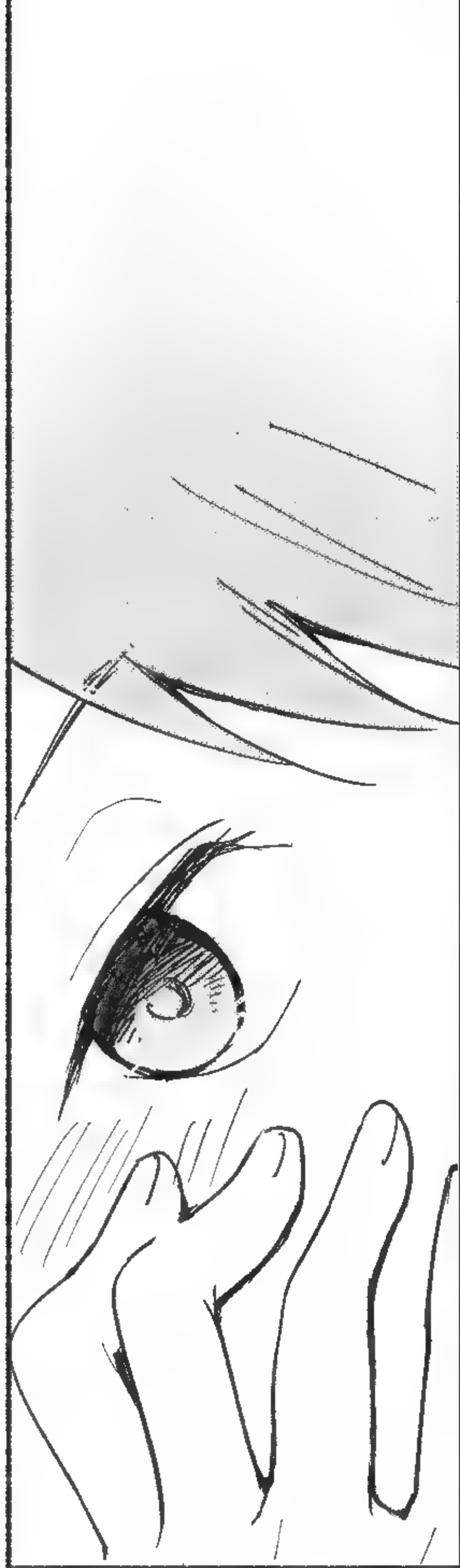
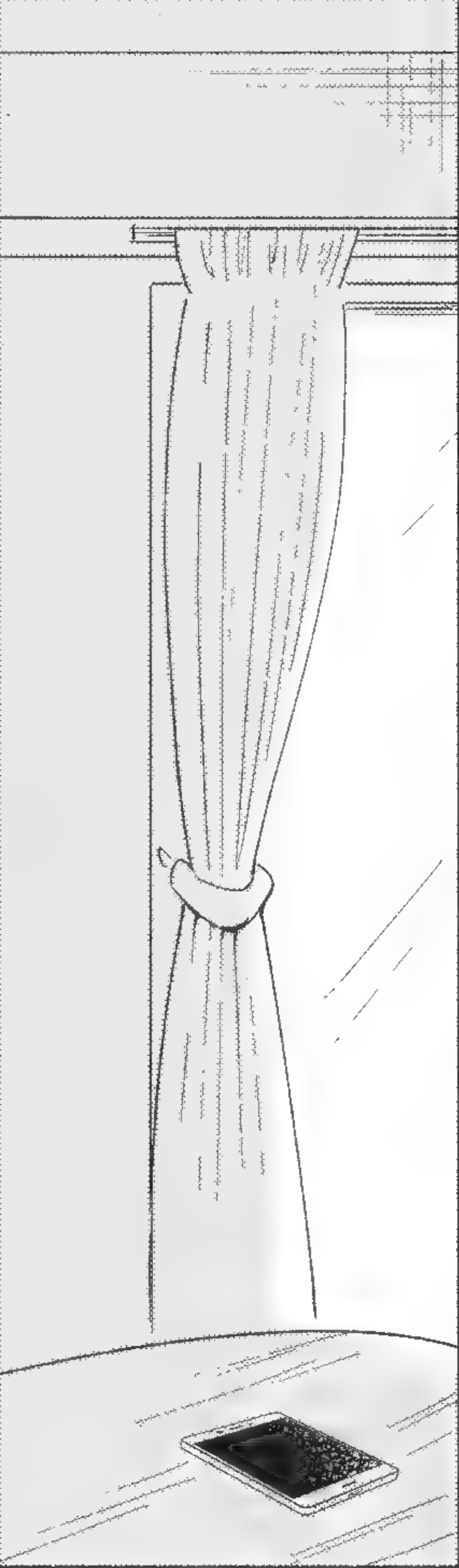
IT'S
DEPRESSING.

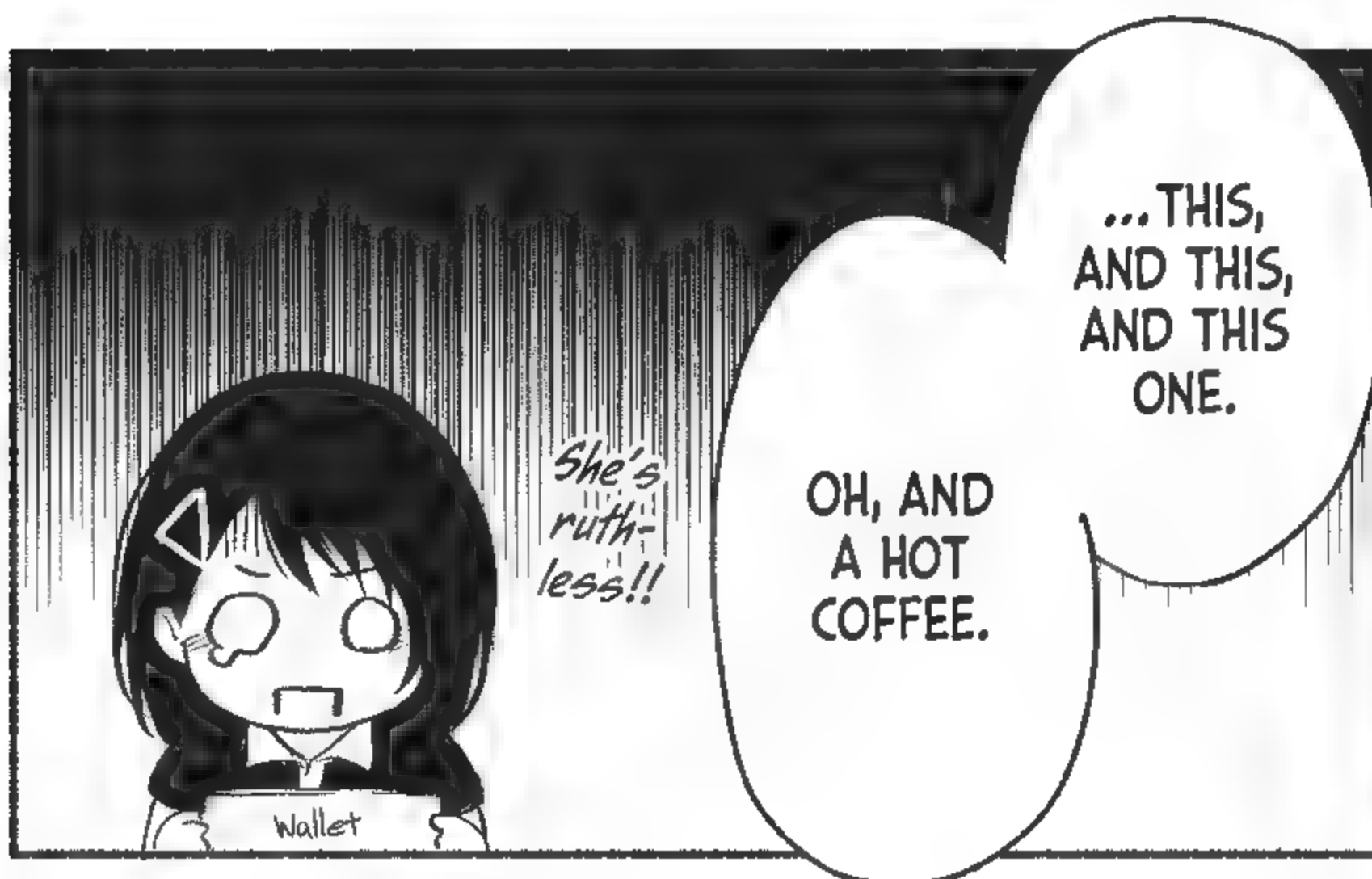
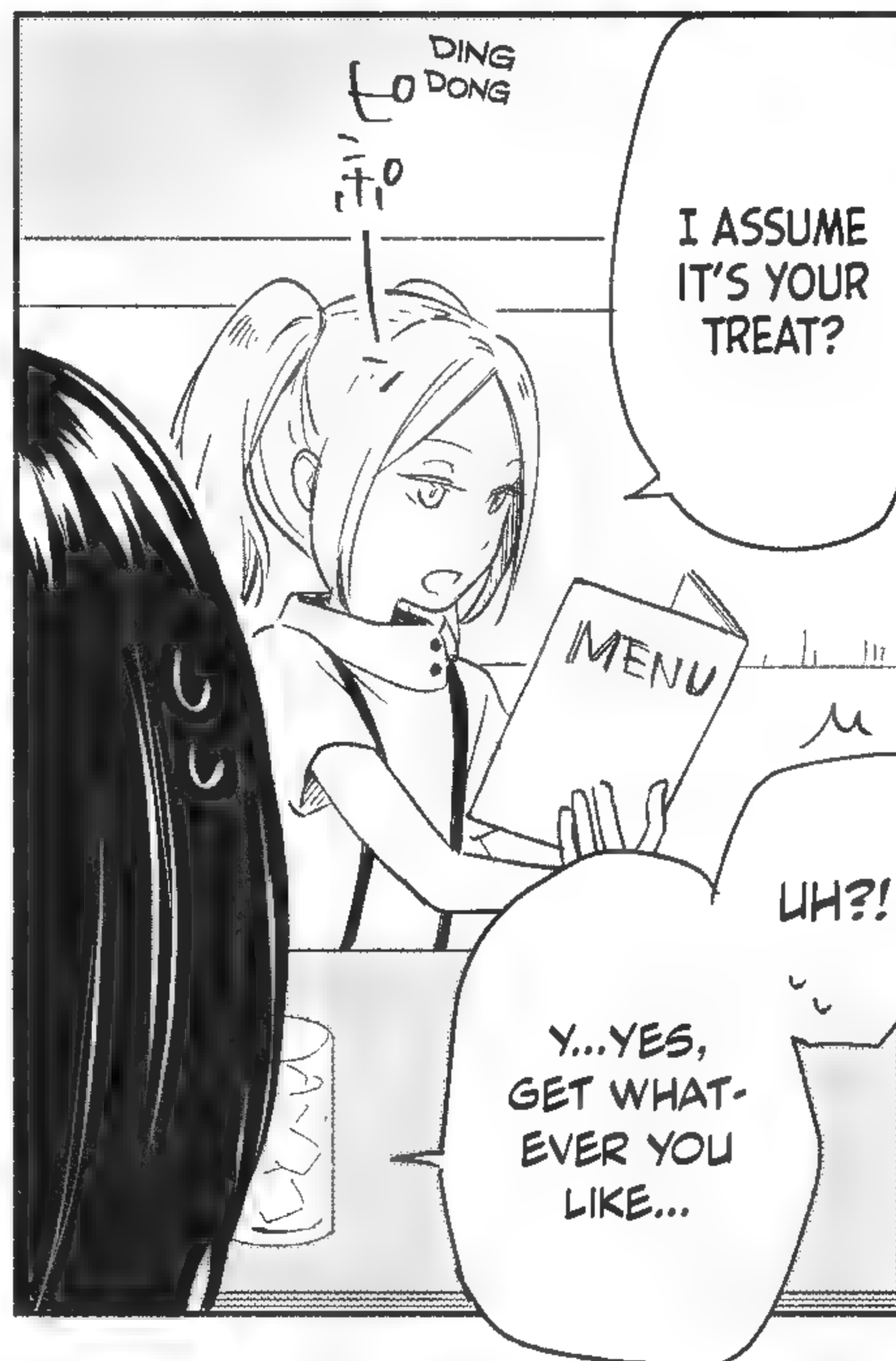
THE DESIRES
THAT I TOSSED
IN THE TRASH
HAVE ALL COME
SPILLING OUT...

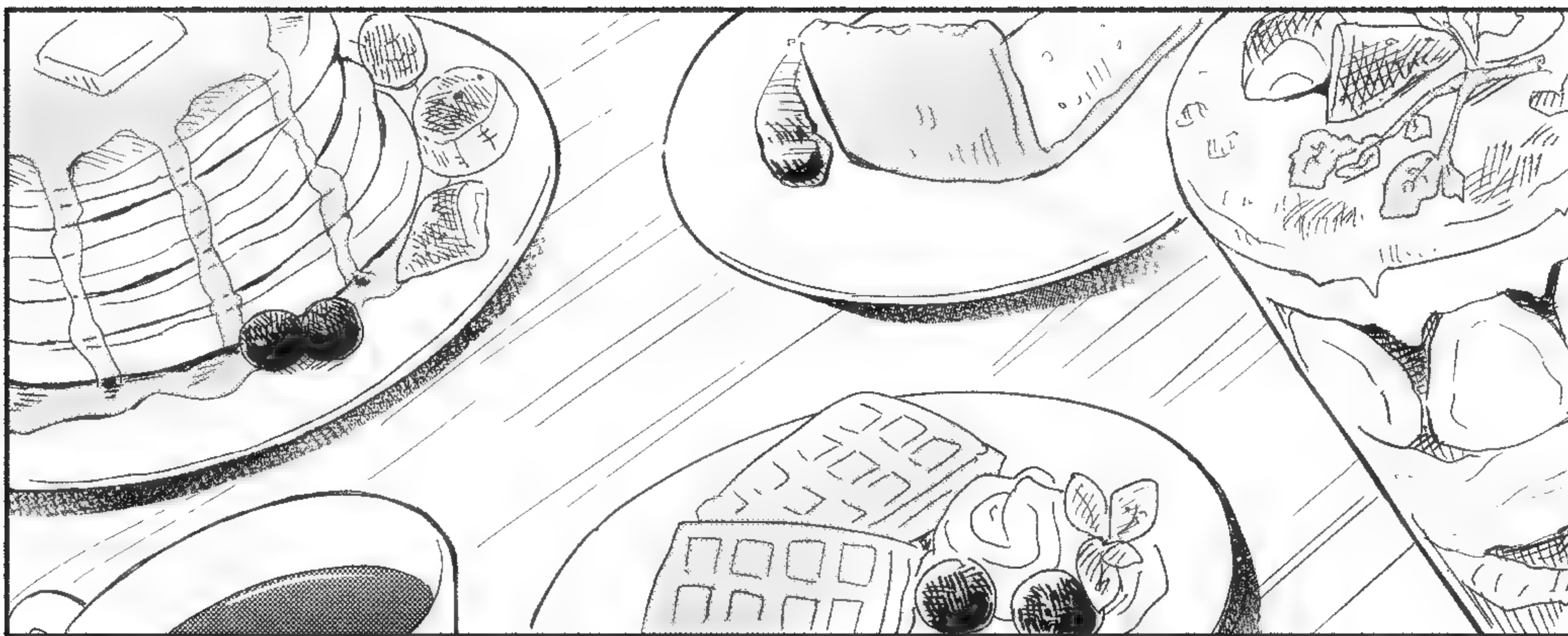


...STIFLING
MY OWN
FEELINGS...

JUST WHEN
I ACTUALLY
STARTED
GETTING
USED TO...







...SO YOU'RE IN A BIND BECAUSE YOU CAN'T FIND PEACE.

...YOU'RE NOW KEENLY AWARE THAT YOUR LOVE WILL ONLY CAUSE YOU PAIN, AND HOW STUPID A SITUATION THAT IS...

SO, TO SUM IT UP...

ANYWAY, WHAT I WANNA SAY IS...

HMM... HONESTLY, IT'S HILARIOUS HOW THIS IS **FINALLY** HAPPENING, LIKE, NOW?

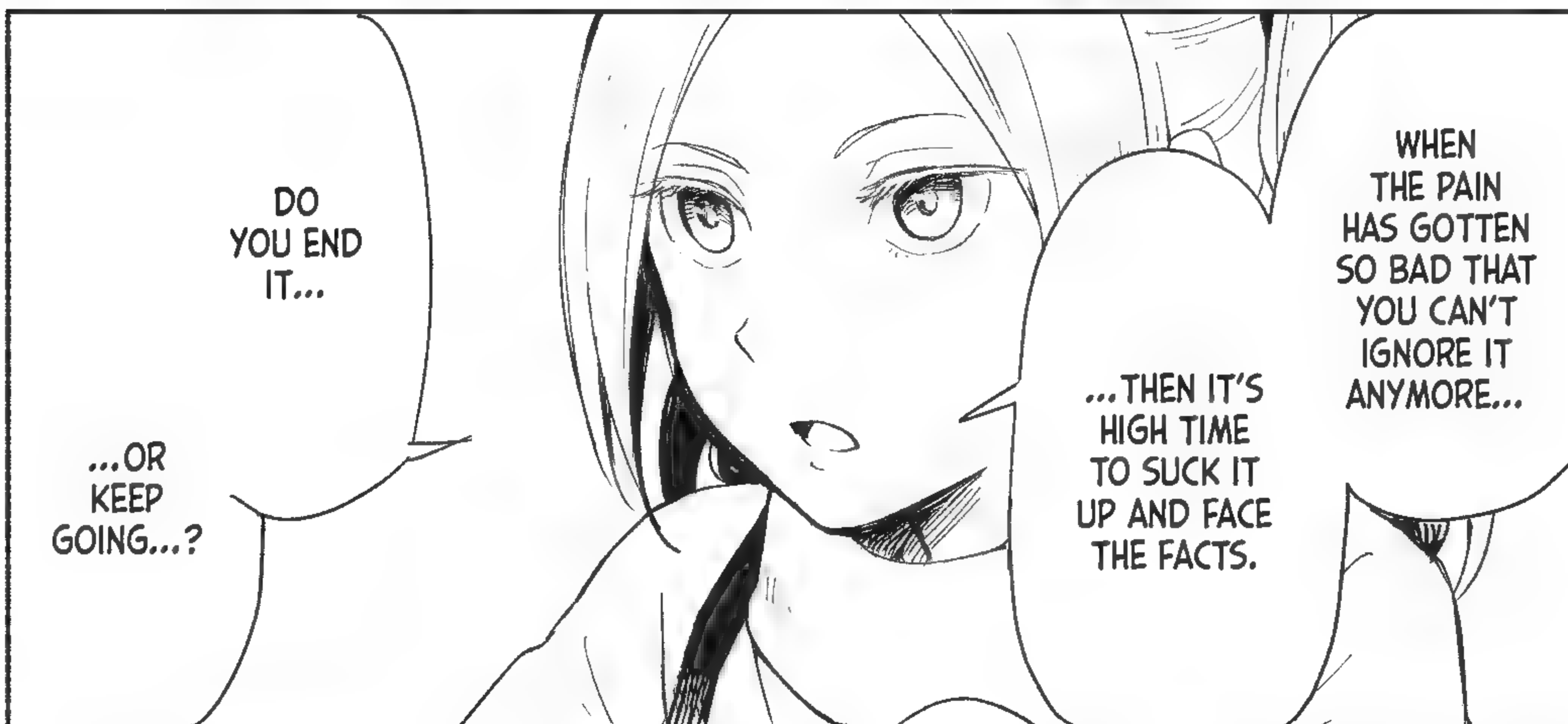
Stupid...?

Y-YEAH...





UH...



...OR
KEEP
GOING...?

DO
YOU END
IT...

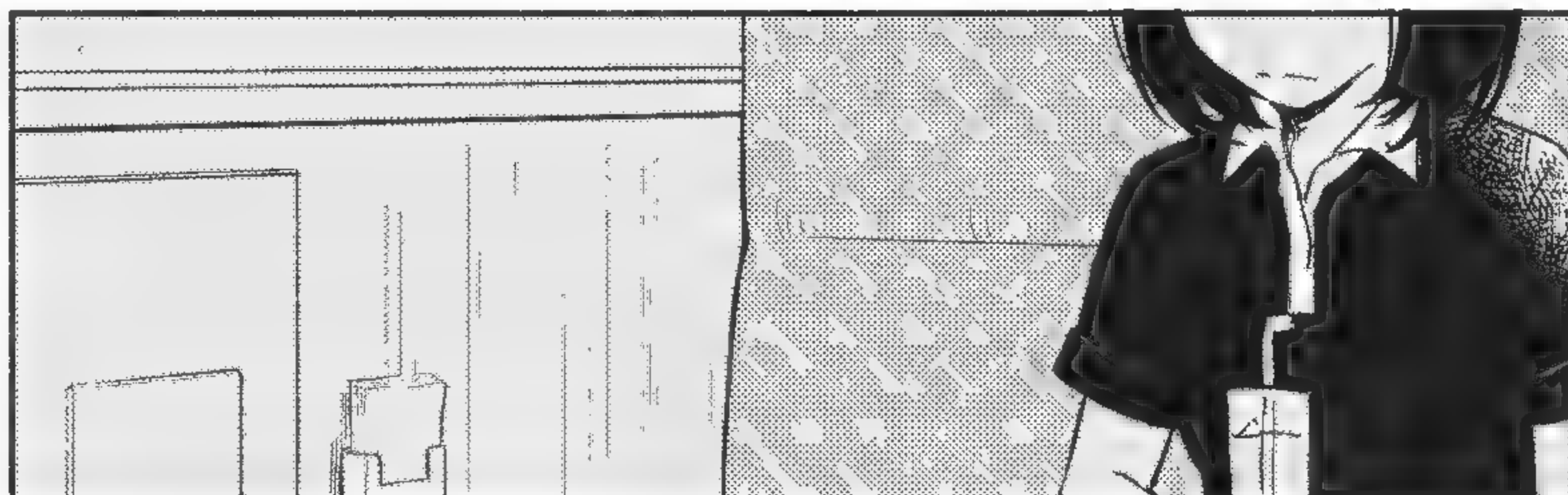
...THEN IT'S
HIGH TIME
TO SUCK IT
UP AND FACE
THE FACTS.

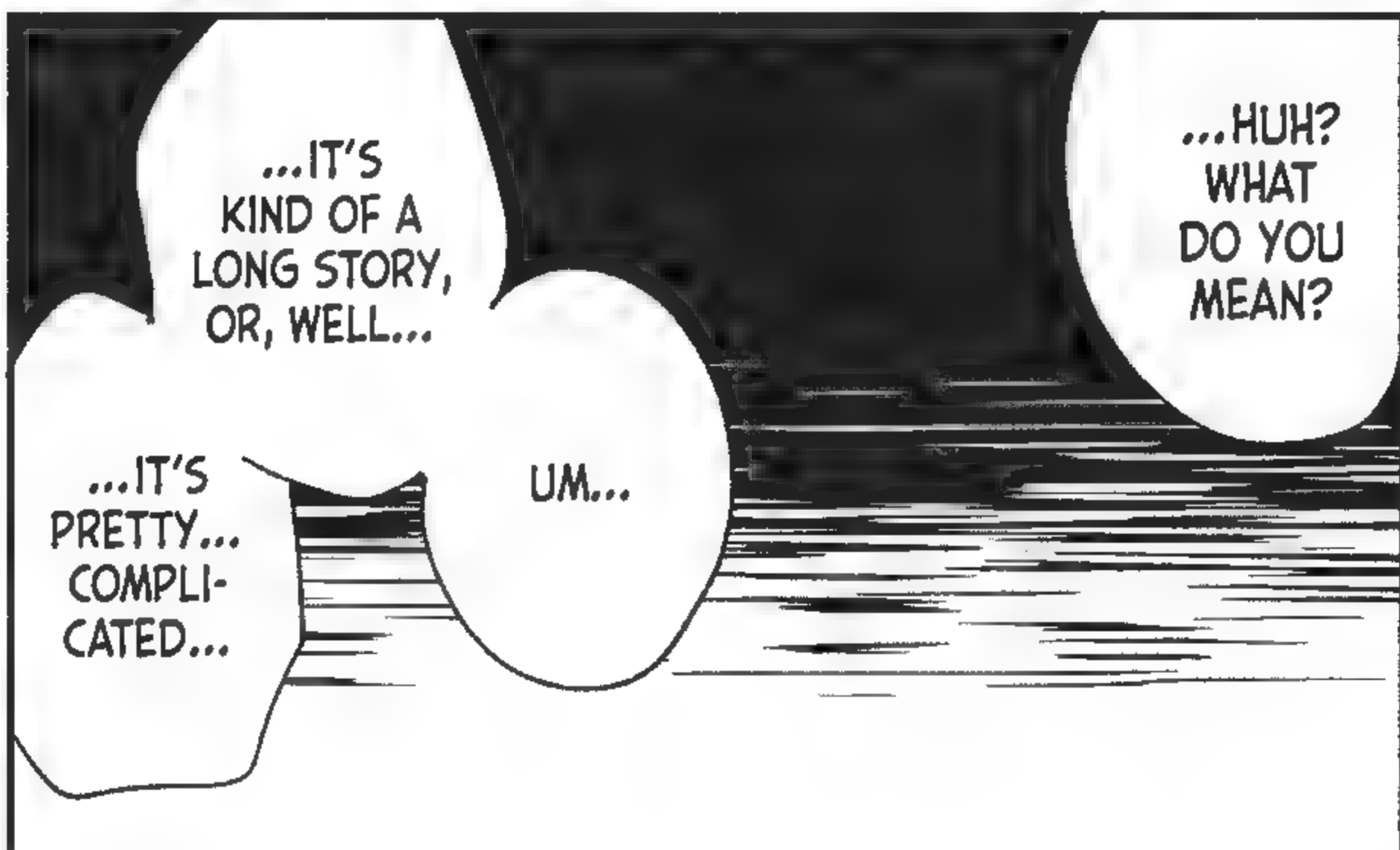
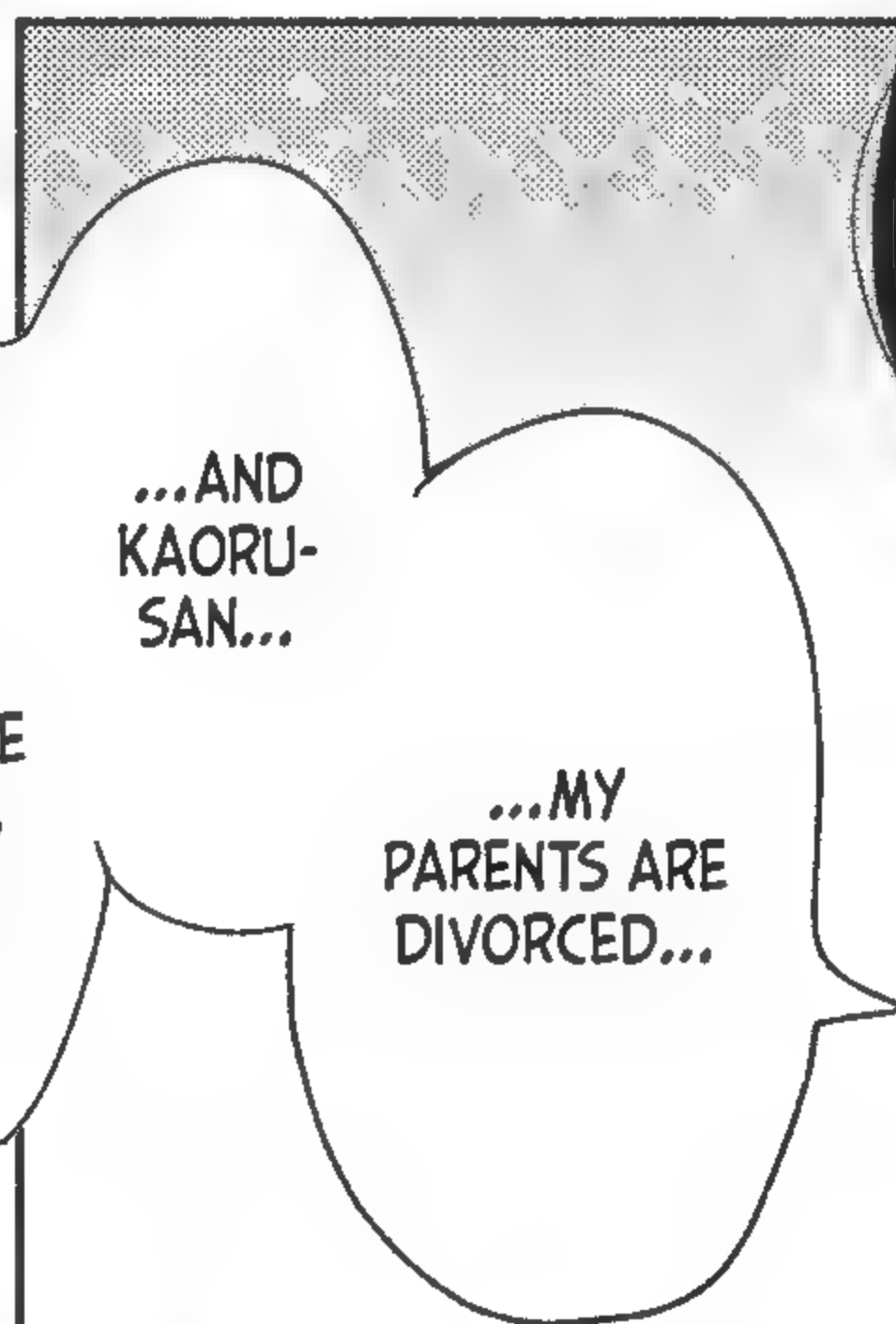
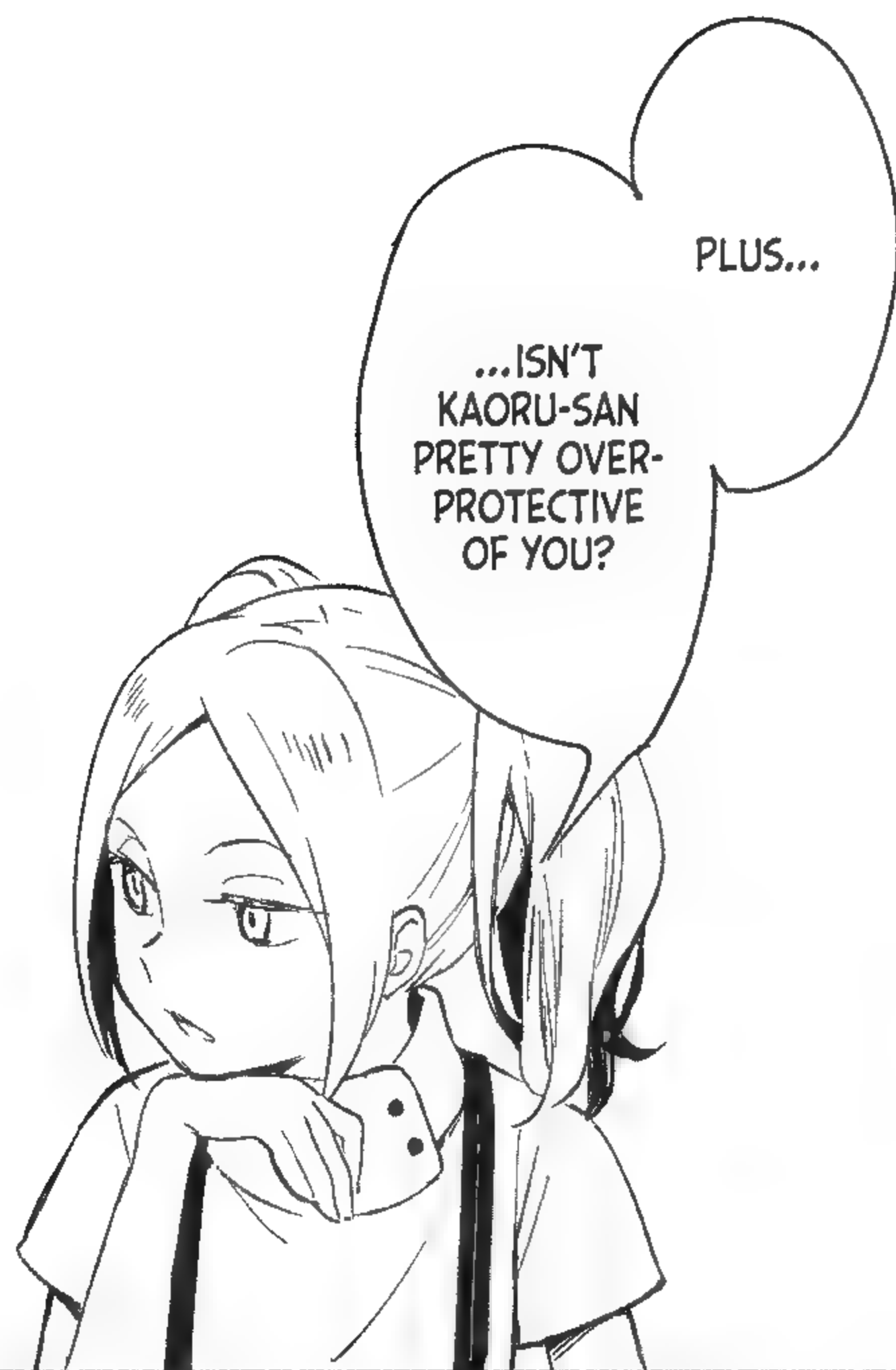
WHEN
THE PAIN
HAS GOTTEN
SO BAD THAT
YOU CAN'T
IGNORE IT
ANYMORE...



WHY DON'T
YOU FACE
IT HEAD ON,
AND THINK
ABOUT IT?

WHAT
IS IT YOU
WANT TO
DO?





CHEERS!

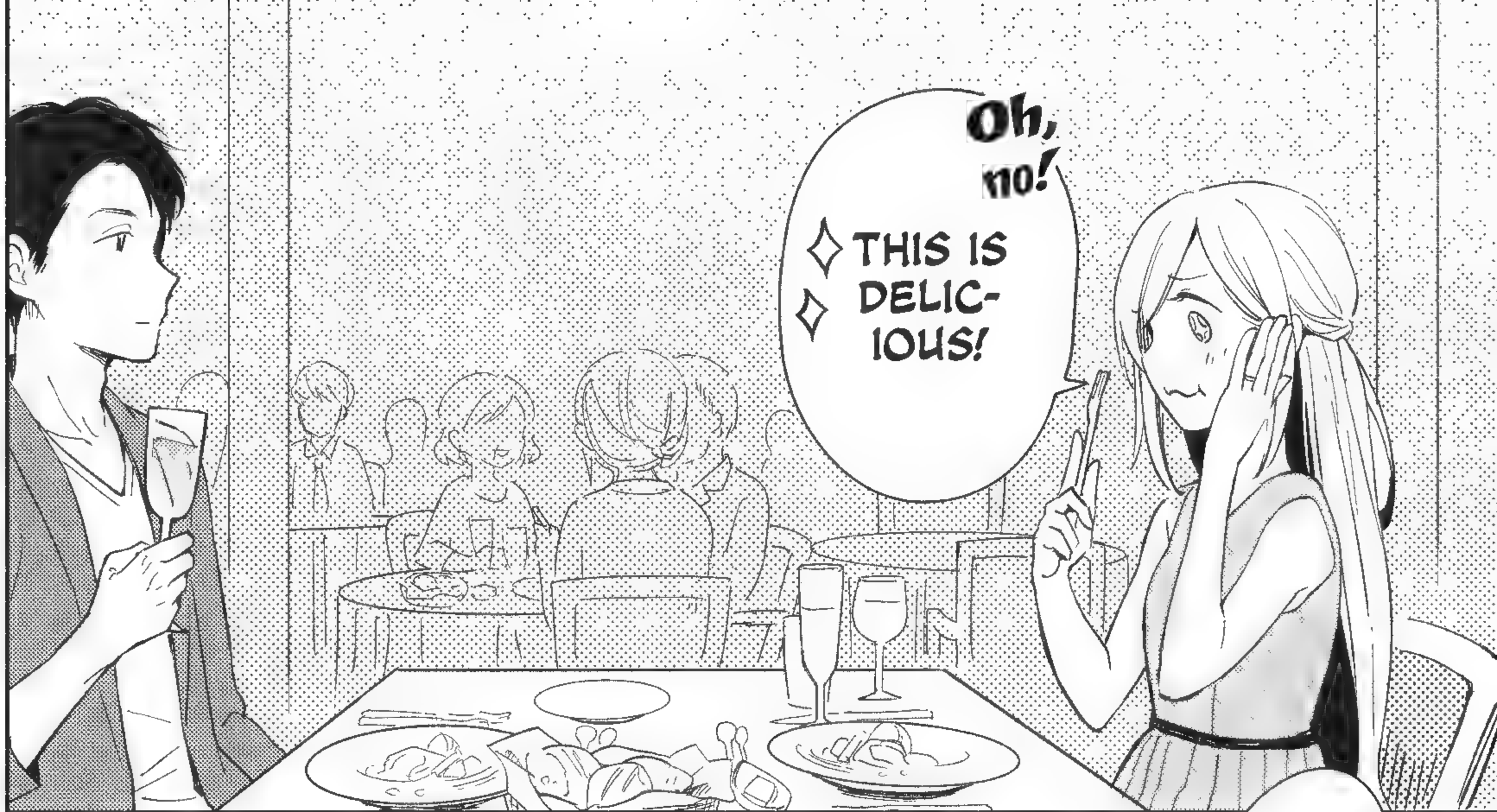
I'LL
HAVE TO
FILL YOU
IN MORE
SOME
OTHER
TIME.

CLATTER

SORRY,
KURO-
CHAN.

*Thanks
for your
business!*

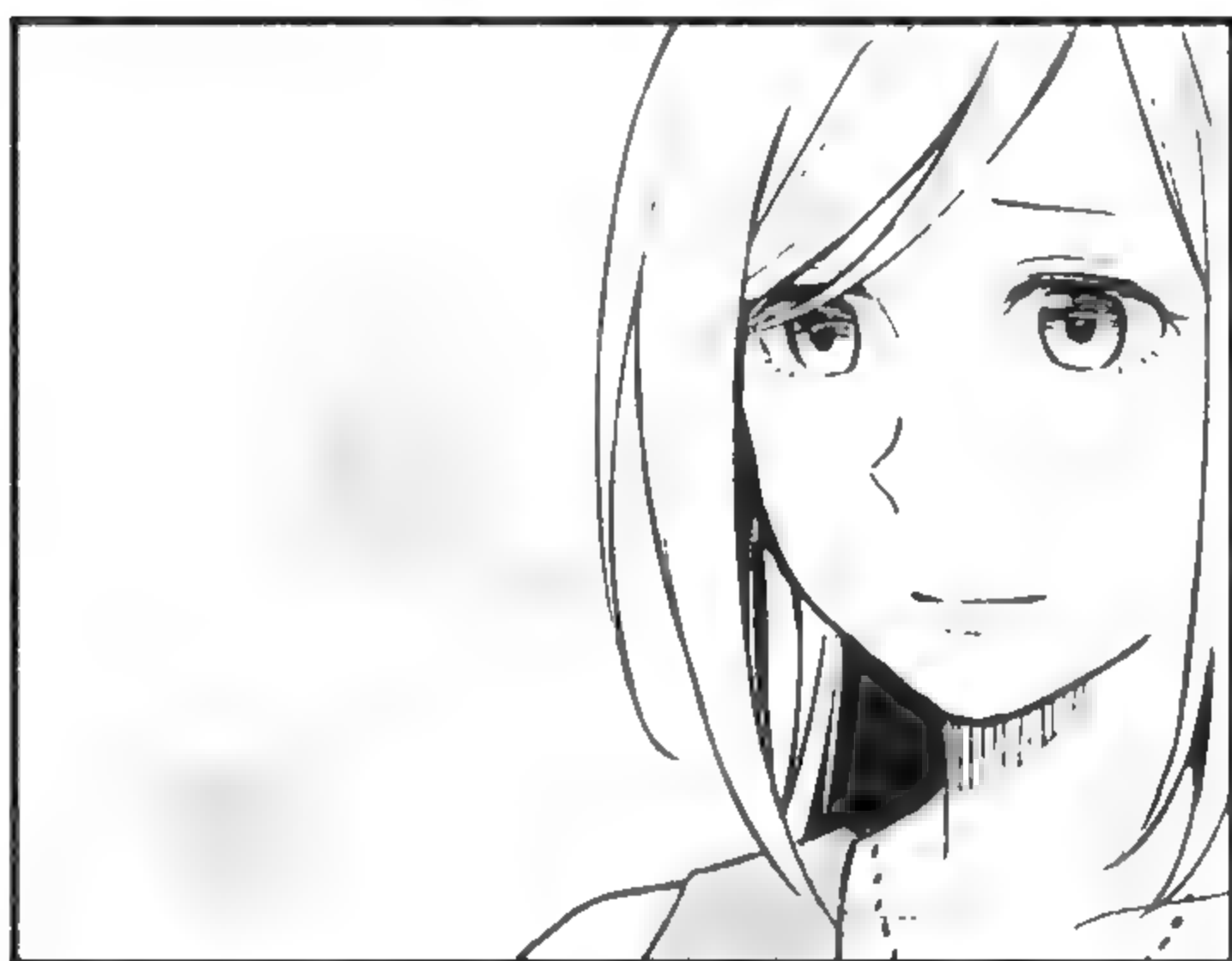
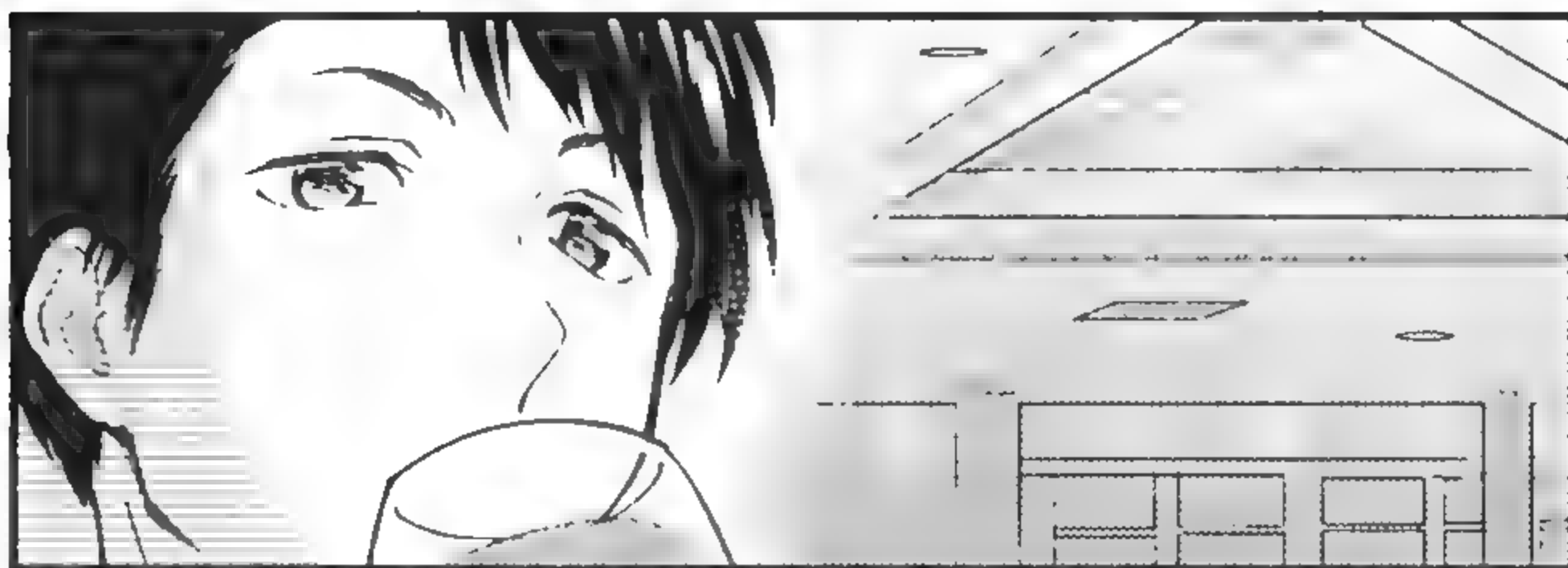
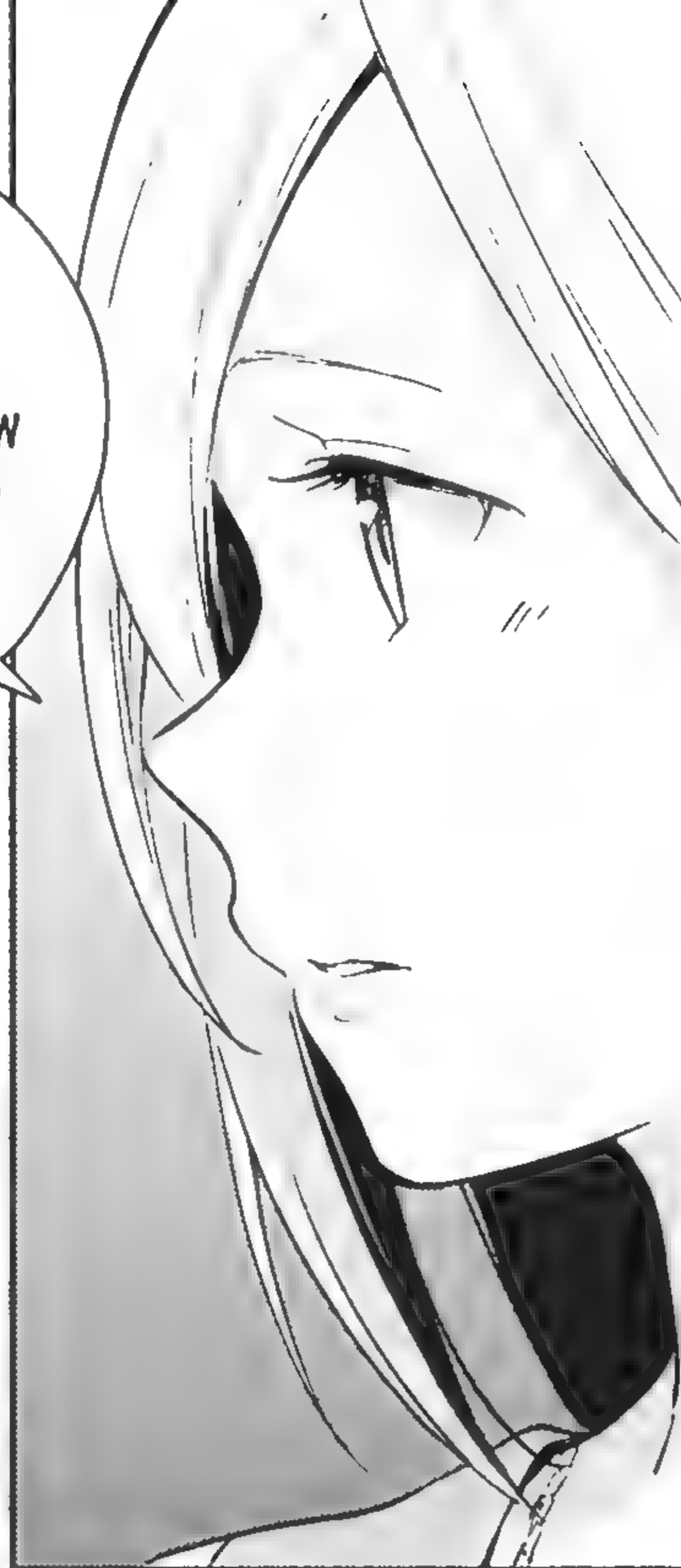
SHE
DIDN'T
PAY...





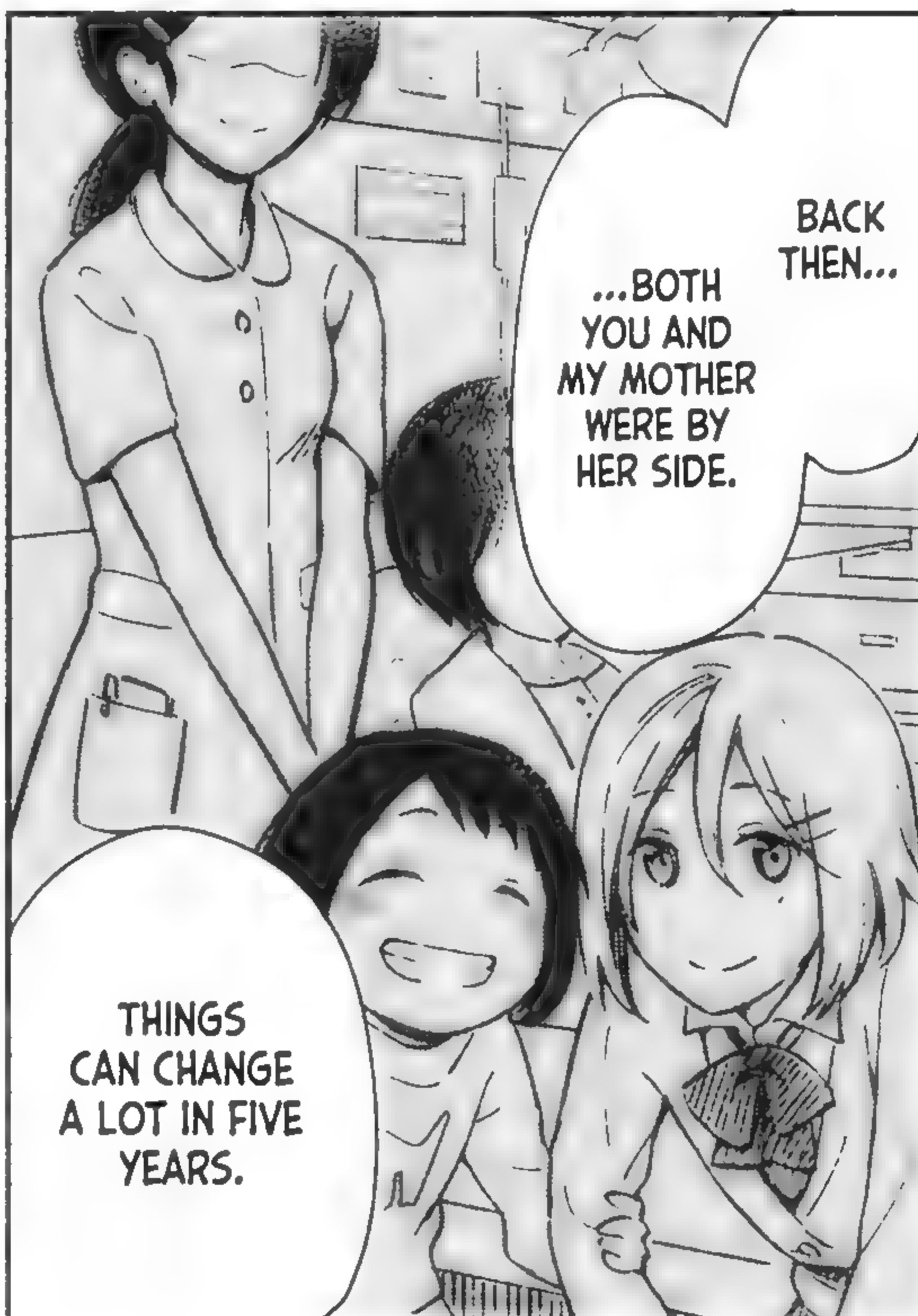
...SHE
WASN'T
THAT KIND
OF KID...

...BACK
WHEN I KNEW
HER WELL...



I...
GUESS
SO.

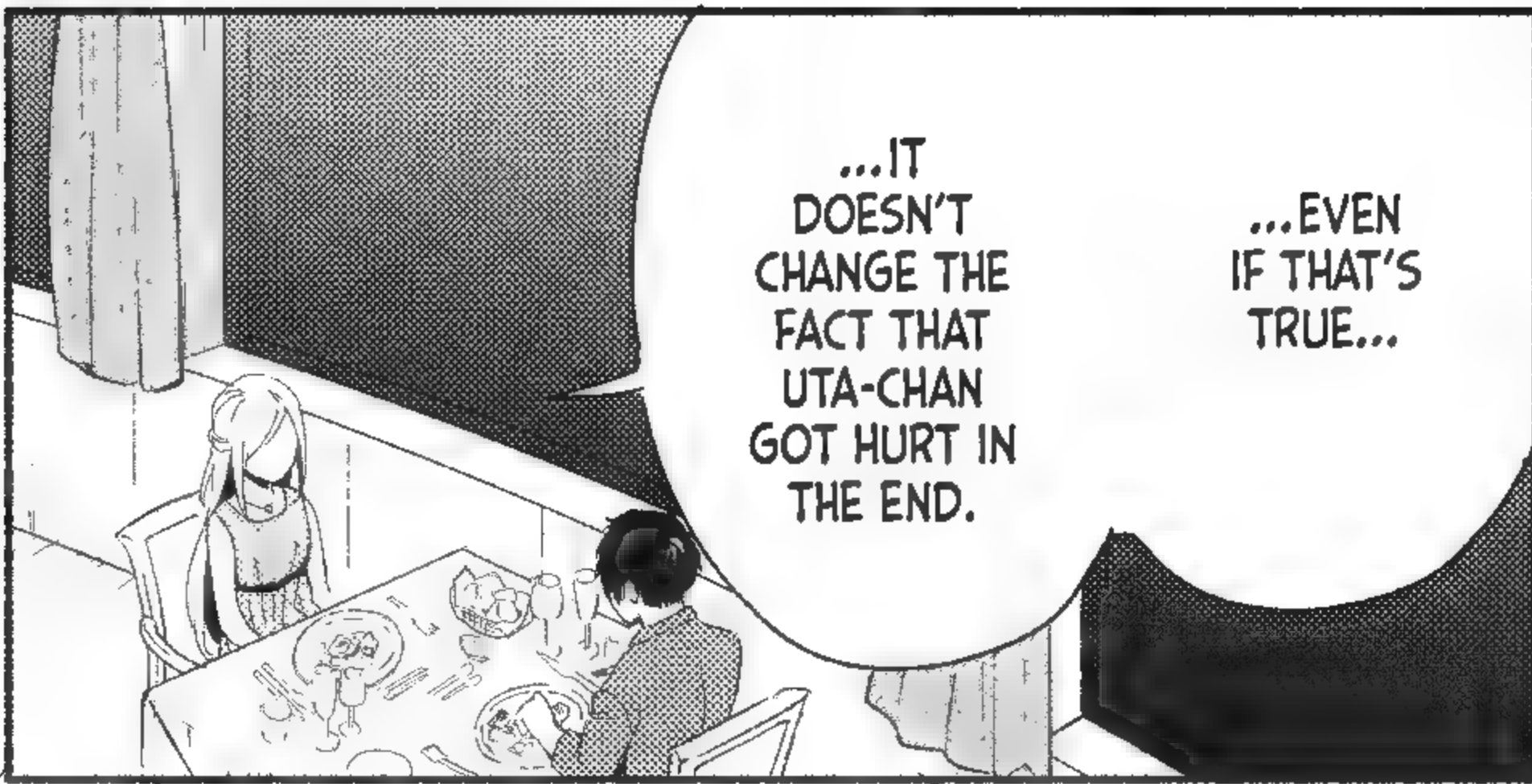
A LOT
PROBABLY
DID
HAPPEN
DURING
THAT
TIME...



BACK
THEN...

...BOTH
YOU AND
MY MOTHER
WERE BY
HER SIDE.

THINGS
CAN CHANGE
A LOT IN FIVE
YEARS.



...IT
DOESN'T
CHANGE THE
FACT THAT
UTA-CHAN
GOT HURT IN
THE END.

...EVEN
IF THAT'S
TRUE...



COME
ON, STOP
LOOKING
LIKE YOU
BLAME
YOURSELF.

THIS ISN'T
YOUR FAULT,
KAORU.



...IN
THAT
CASE...

...THERE'S
NO NEED
TO WORRY.



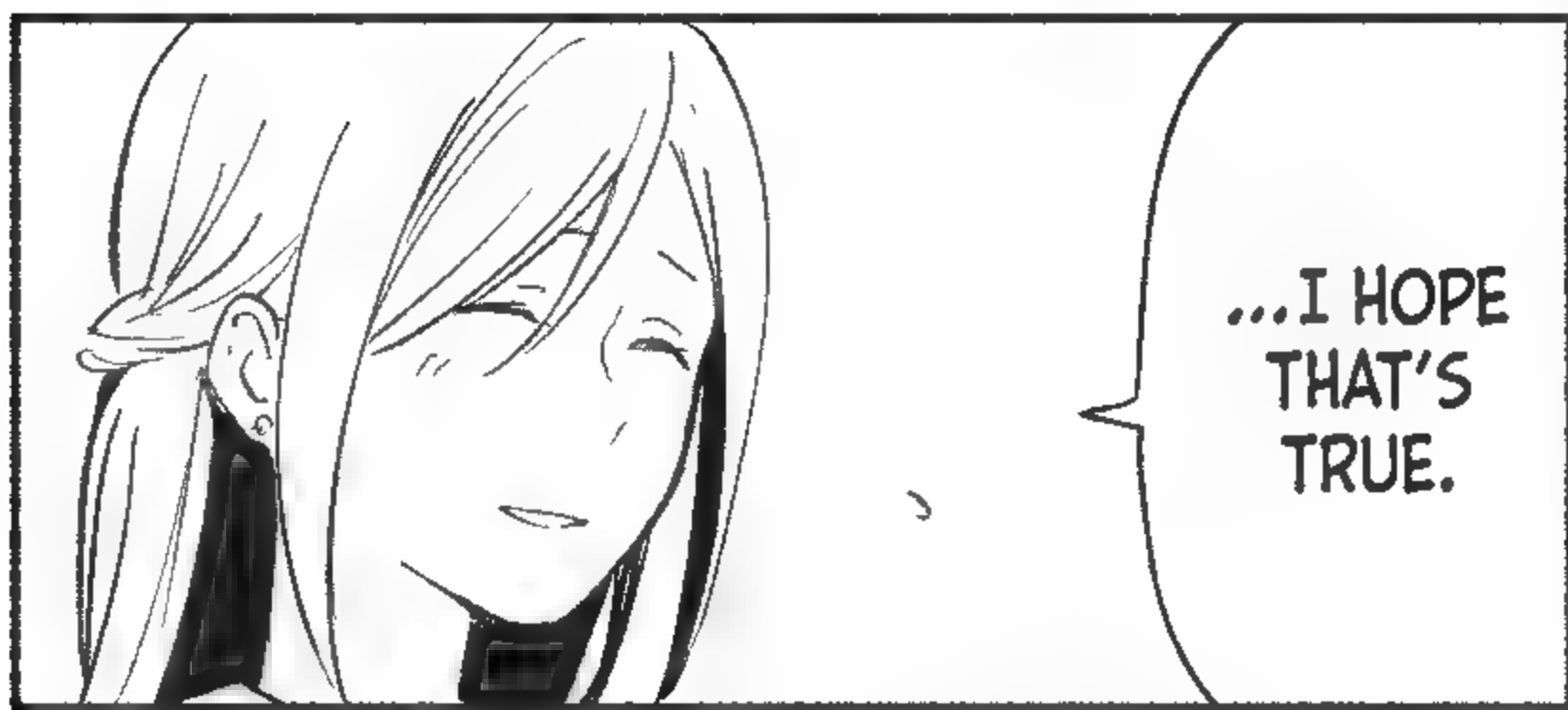
SO,
AT LEAST
WHILE WE'RE
STILL LIVING
TOGETHER...

...I WANT
TO MAKE THIS
TIME HAPPY
FOR HER,
IF EVEN JUST
A LITTLE BIT.



THANK
YOU.

I THINK IT'S
BECAUSE YOU'RE
AROUND HER,
KAORU.



...I HOPE
THAT'S
TRUE.

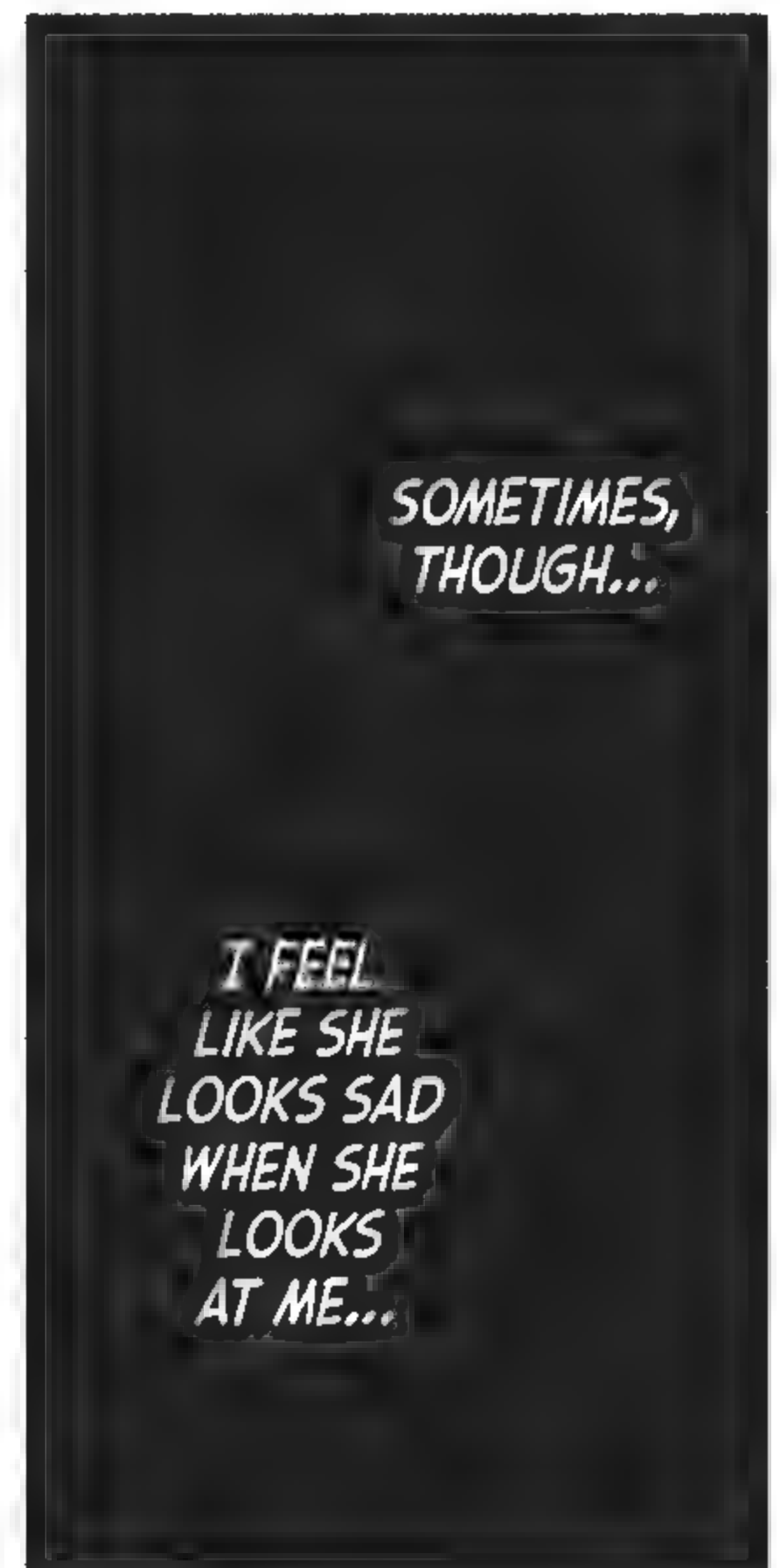


SHE'S
ALREADY
SMILING FAR
MORE THAN
SHE DID...

...WHEN
SHE FIRST
MOVED IN
WITH US.



BEEP
BEEP



SOMETIMES,
THOUGH...

I FEEL
LIKE SHE
LOOKS SAD
WHEN SHE
LOOKS
AT ME...



Wah!



...I WONDER
IF THIS WAS
WHAT KAORU-
SAN WAS TRYING
TO TALK TO ME
ABOUT BEFORE
SHE LEFT...

COME
TO THINK
OF IT...



ANYWAY,
I NEED SOME
MEDICINE...

Where
was it?

M
M
M
N
N



THAT'S...

...KINDA
HIGH...

It's
not
just a
slight
fever!

*AROUND 101°F.



UGH...

WHAT
DO
I DO?

THINKING
ABOUT IT
WEARS ME
OUT EVEN
MORE...



WHEN
YOU'RE SICK...



...WHY
DO YOU
SUDDENLY
FEEL SO
FORLORN...?

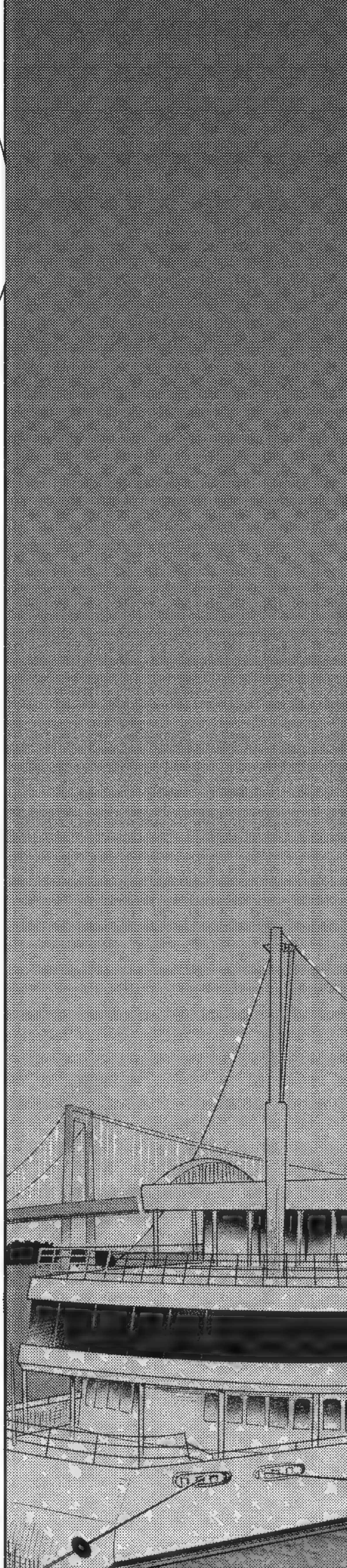
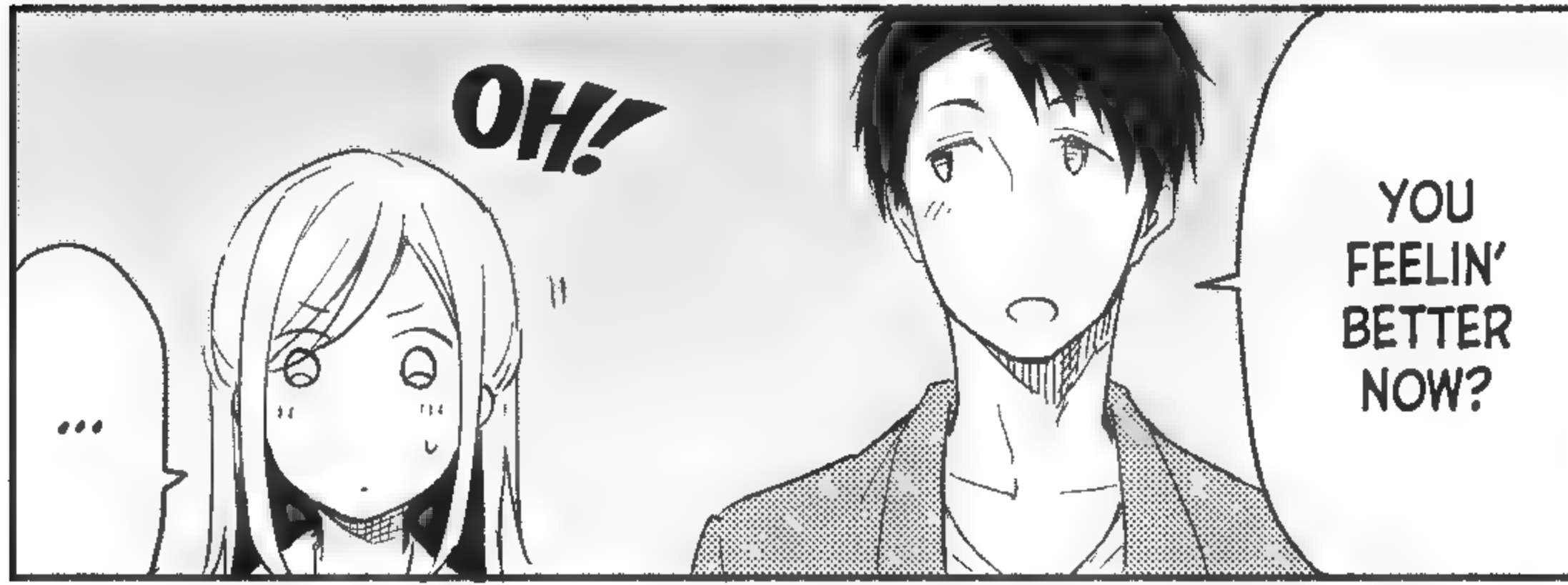
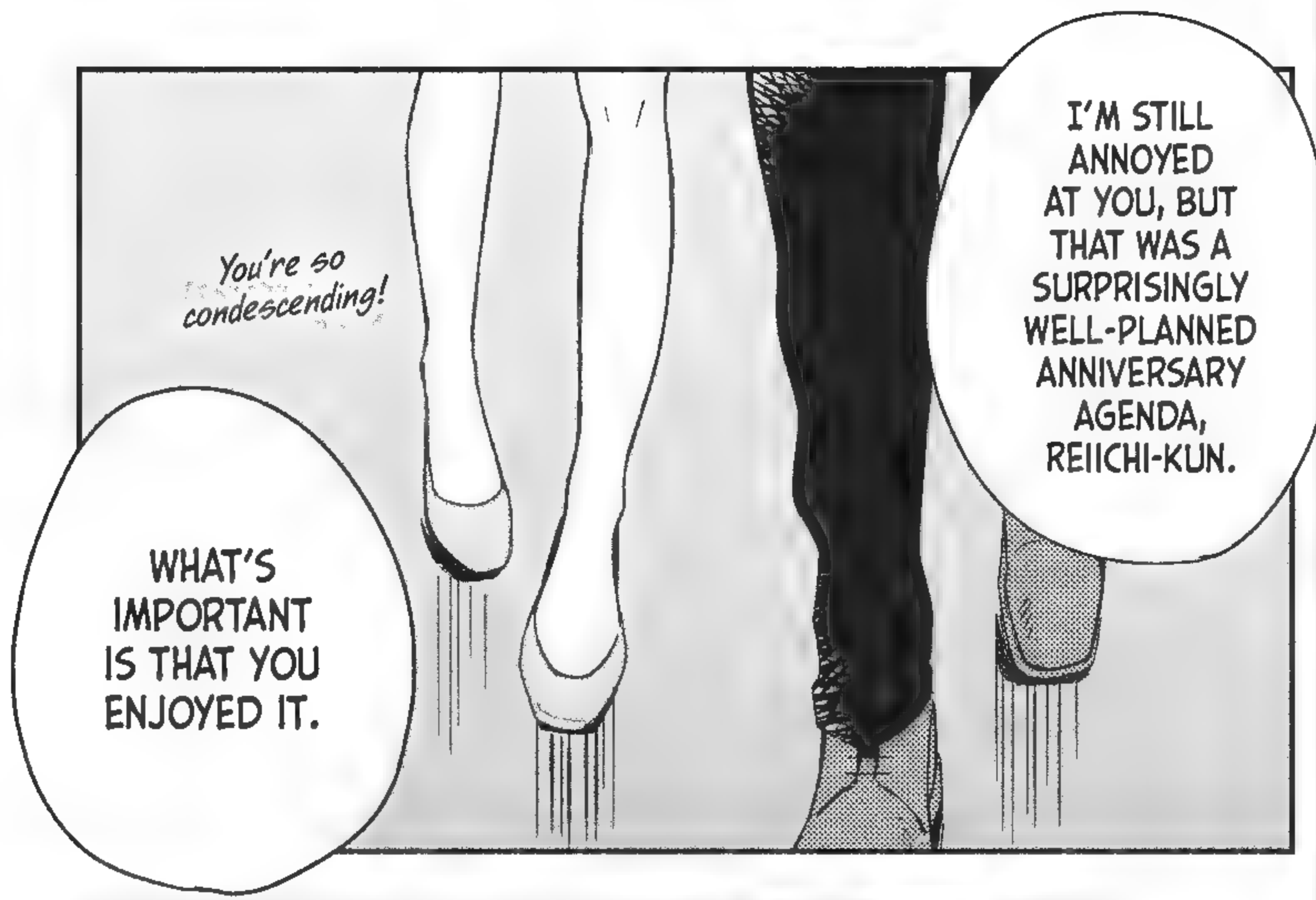


KAORU...

...SA...N...



SOMEONE...







NO, I
WAS JUST
THINKING
HOW CUTE
IT IS TO SEE
YOU BEING
SO HONEST
FOR ONCE.

ニヤニヤ
smirk



THAT'S NOT
SOMETHING
TO LAUGH
AAAT!

*It was
really hard
for me to
say that!*

YOU
MEANIE!

AH!

AHAHA!



Wah!

GWIP



I'M
SORRY.

I'LL TRY
NOT TO
MAKE YOU
FEEL LONELY
ANYMORE.



IT'S
RARE
FOR YOU
TO...

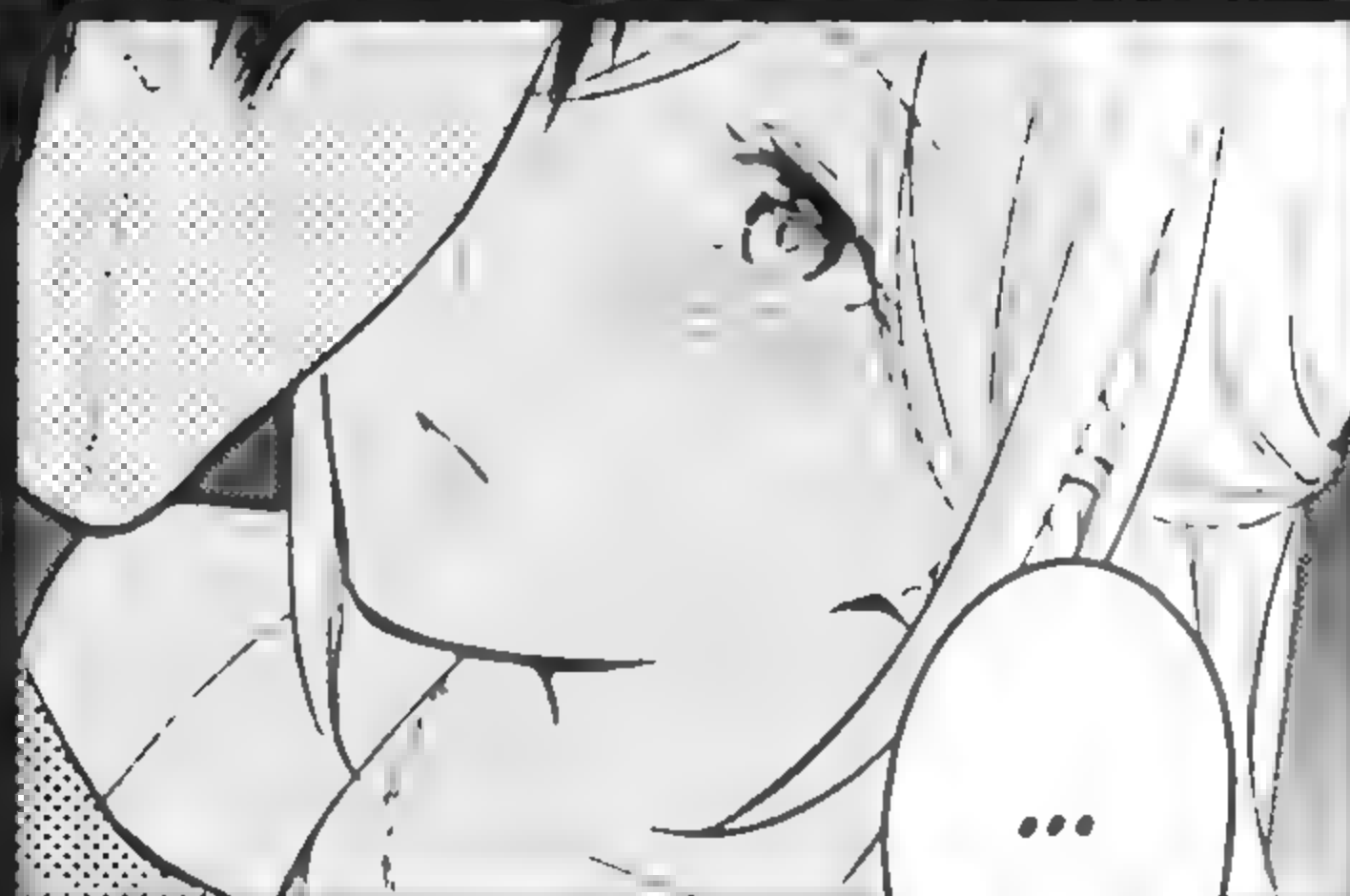
...SAY
SOMETHING
LIKE THAT
TO ME.

...GUESS
SO.

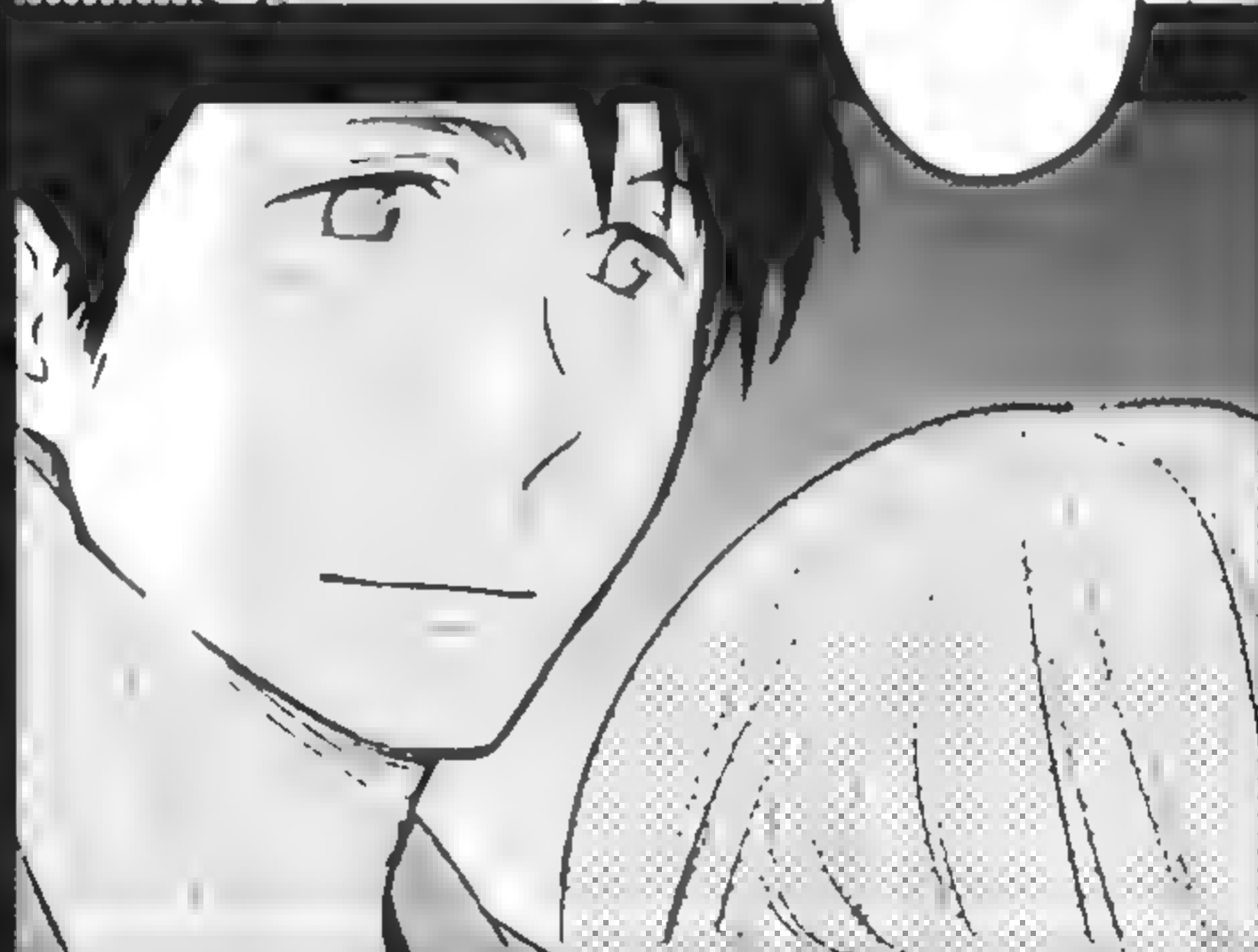
*The
downside
of being
childhood
friends...*

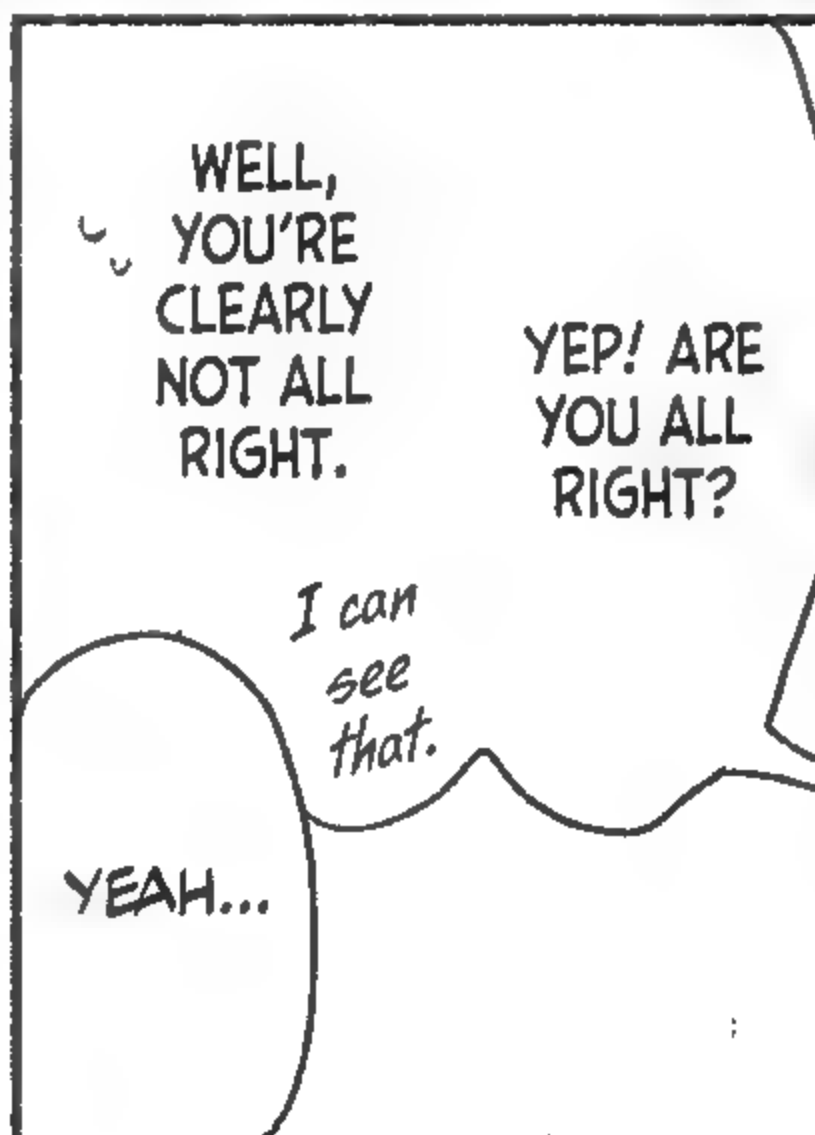
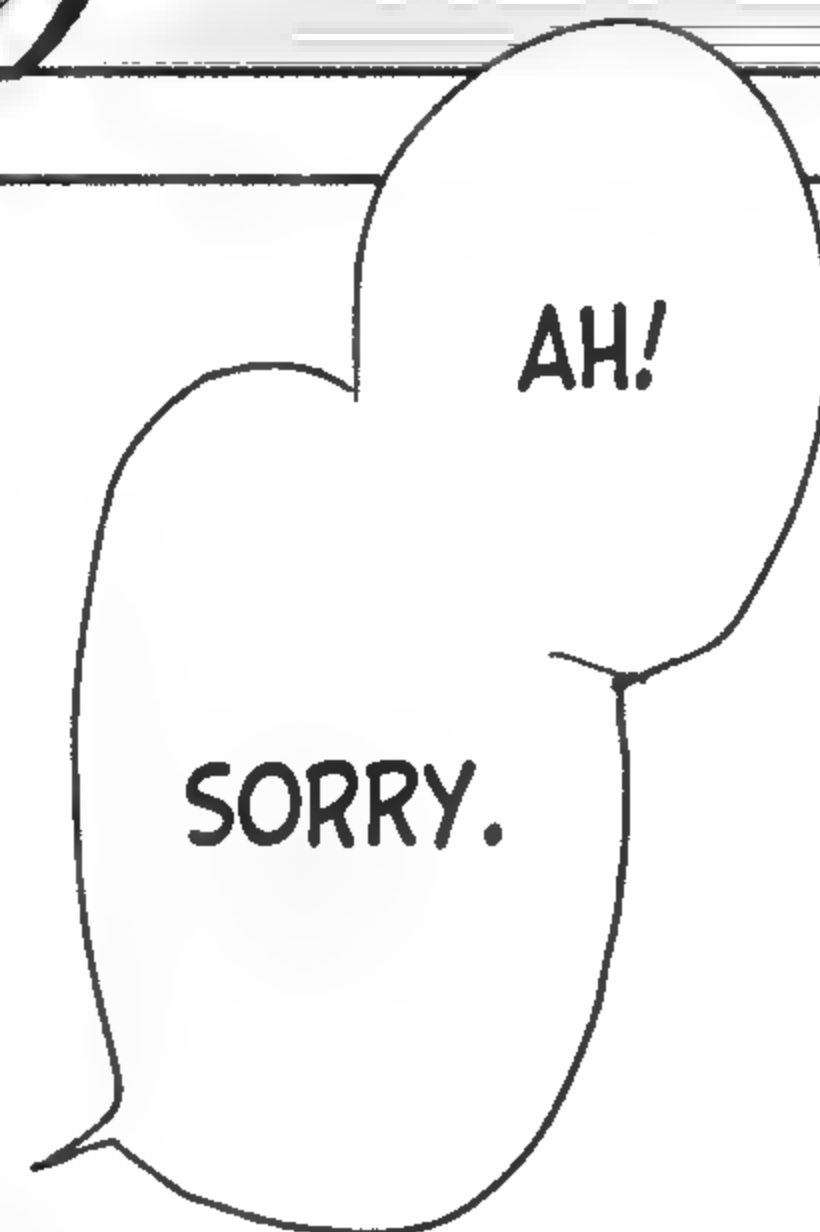
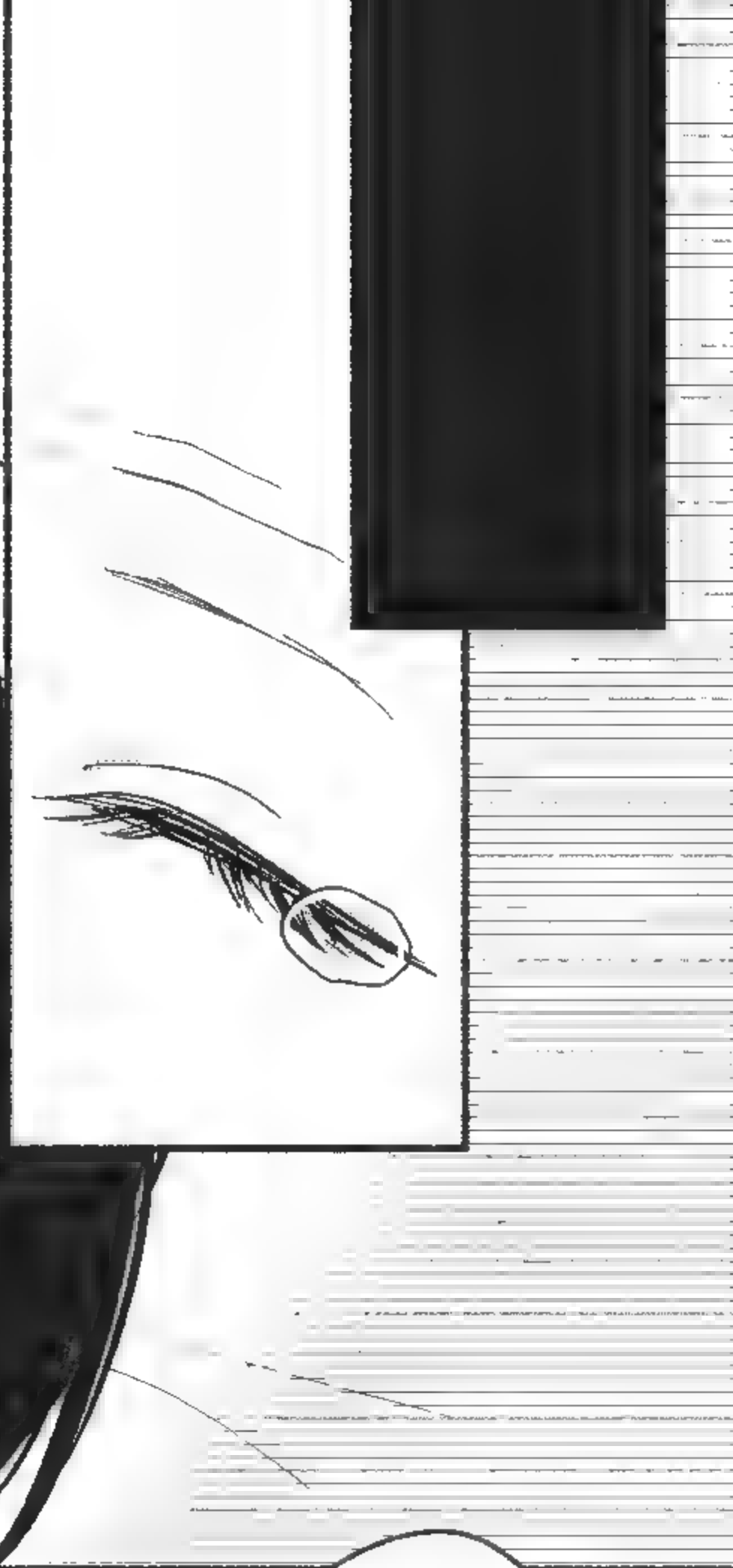


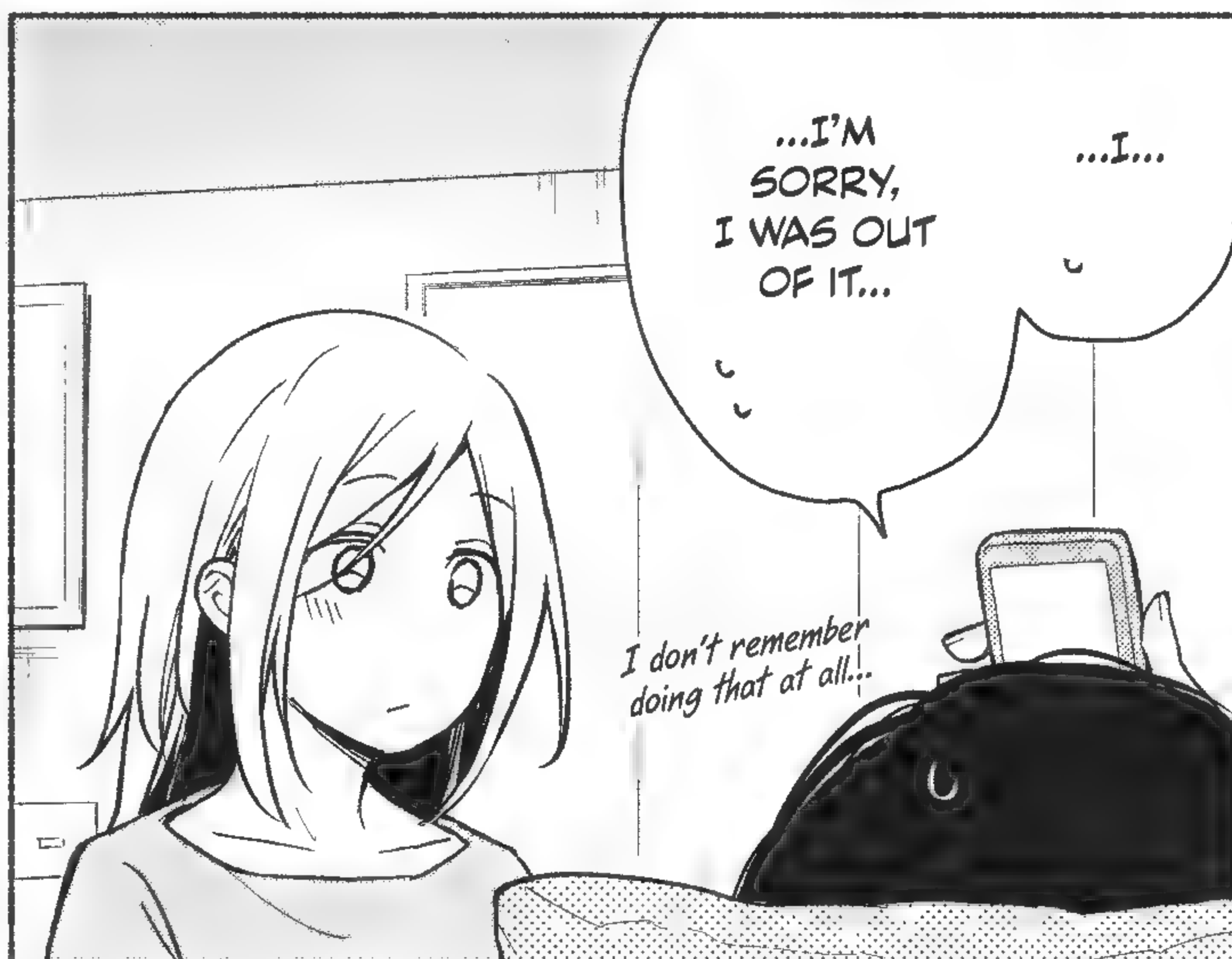
...LET'S
REST FOR A
BIT SOME-
WHERE AND
THEN HEAD
HOME.

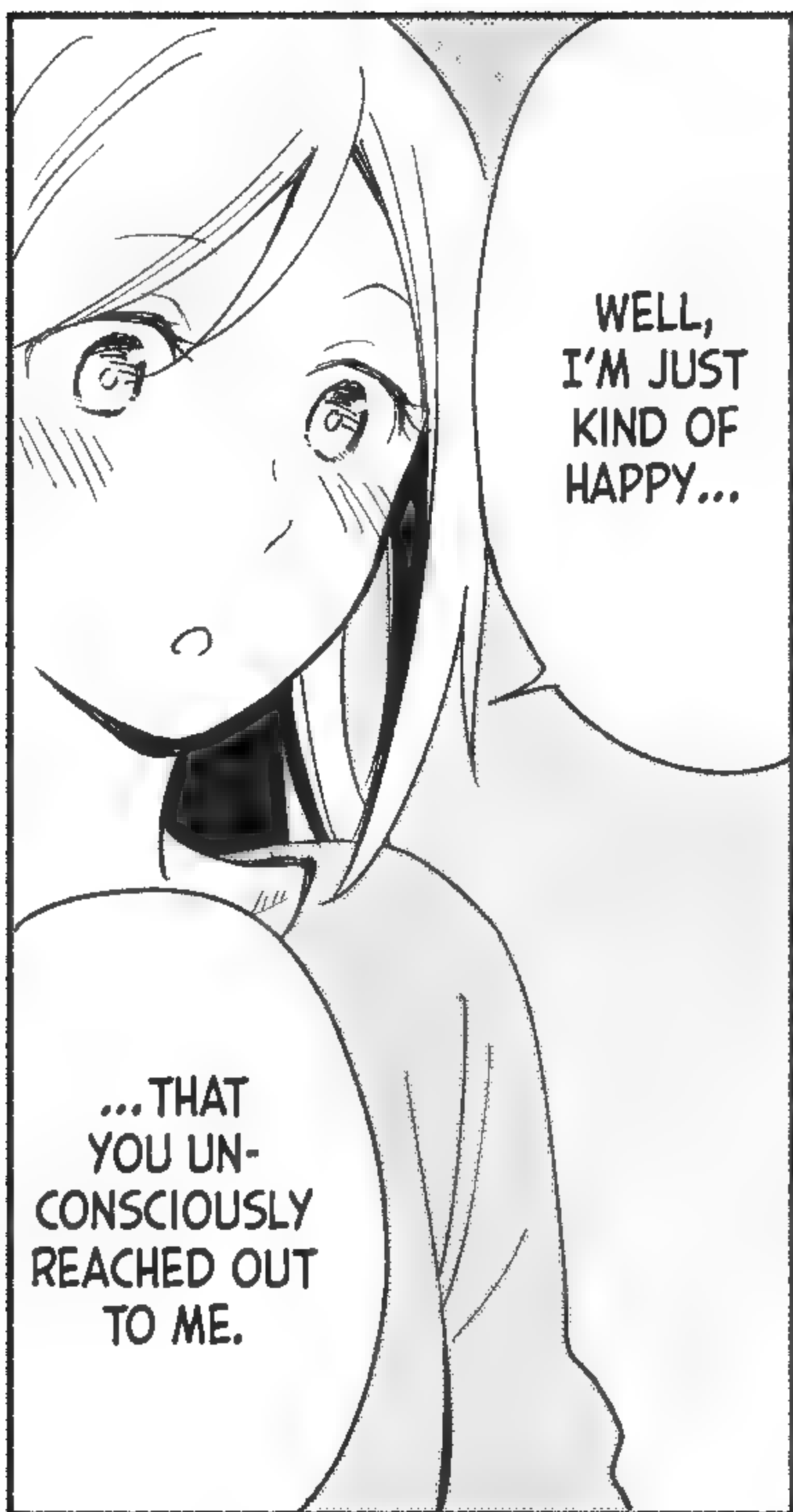


...

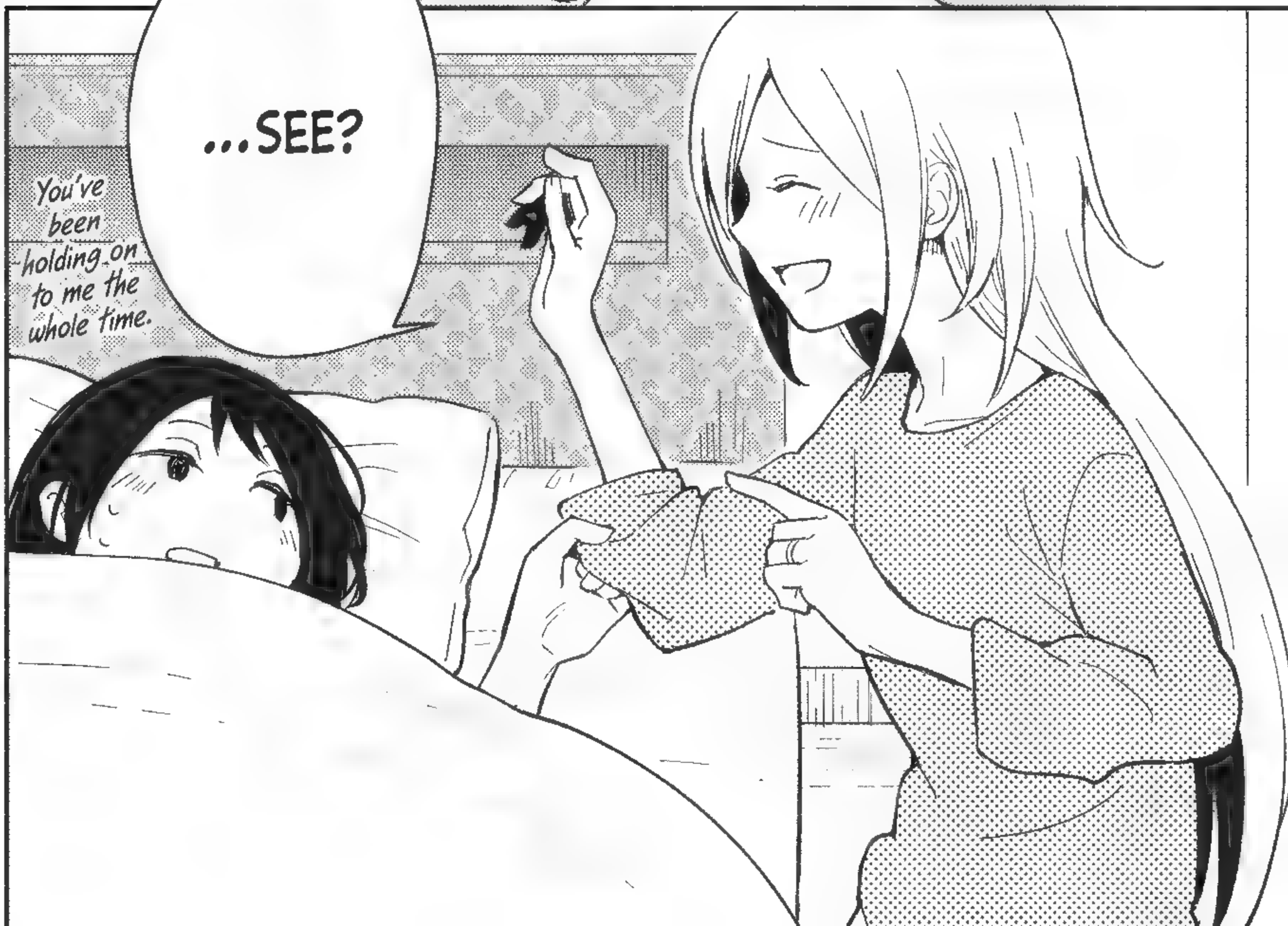








SQUEEZE





I'LL STAY
HERE UNTIL
YOU FALL
ASLEEP.

SO YOU
CAN REST
EASY.



MY
APOLOGIES...

...FUTURE
ME.



EVEN IF
I KNOW
IT'S JUST
GOING TO
BE PAINFUL
FOR ME
LATER...



...I'M NOT
READY...

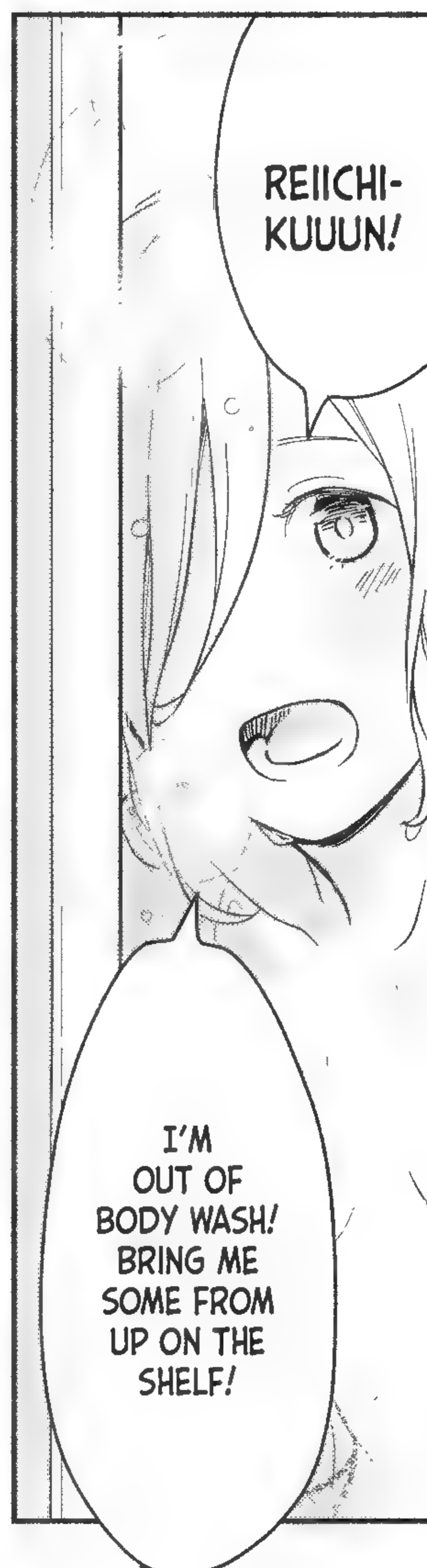
...TO LET
GO OF THIS
WARMTH
JUST YET.

*If I Could
Reach You*

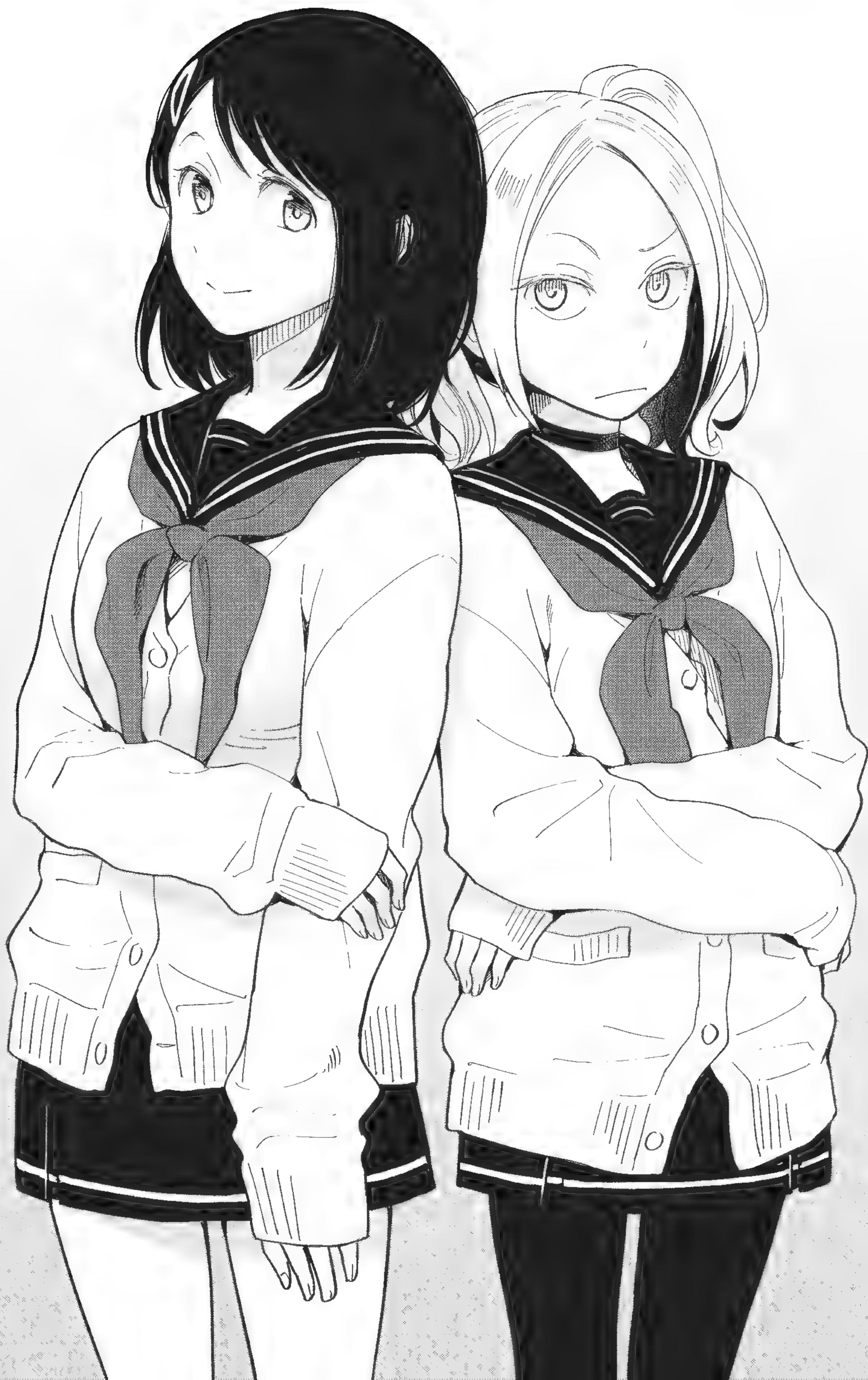
*If I Could
Reach You*

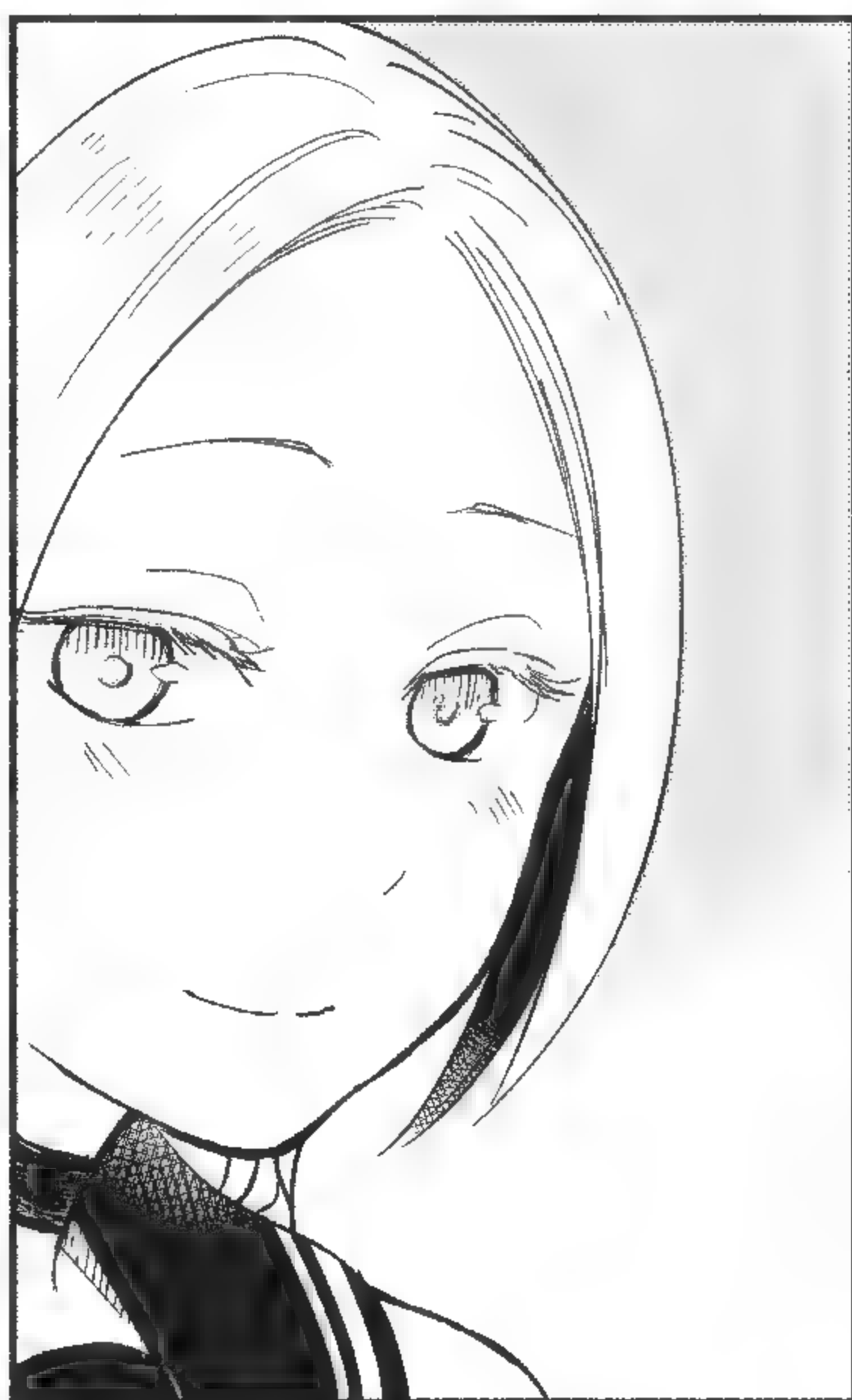
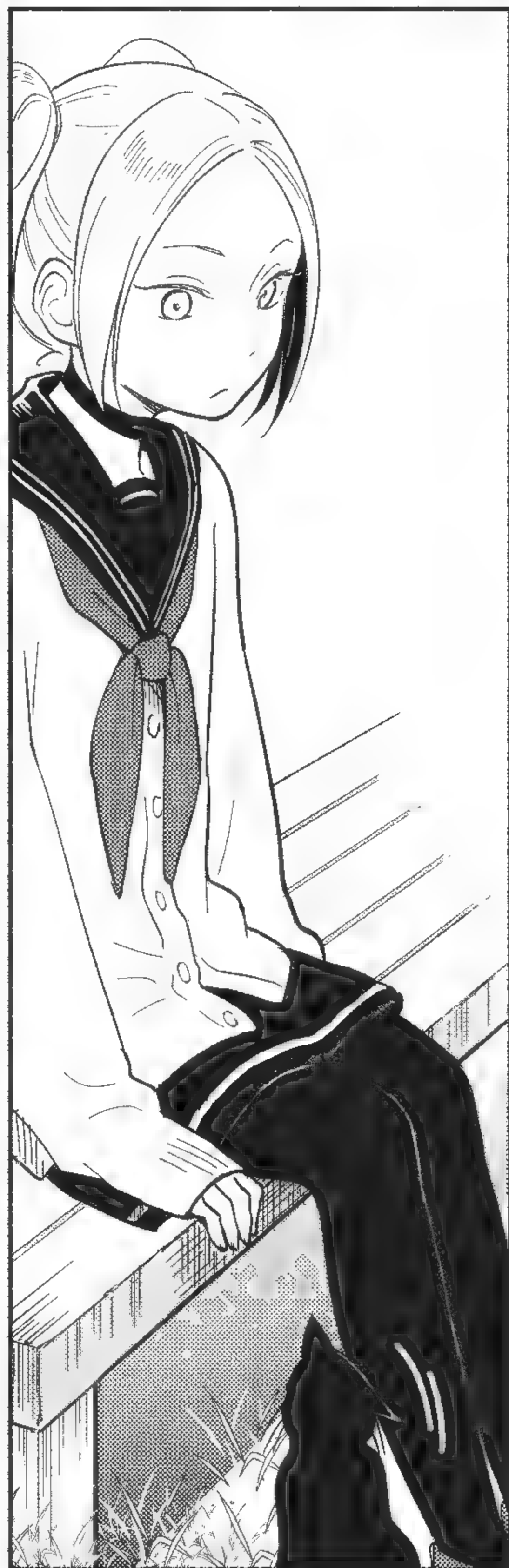
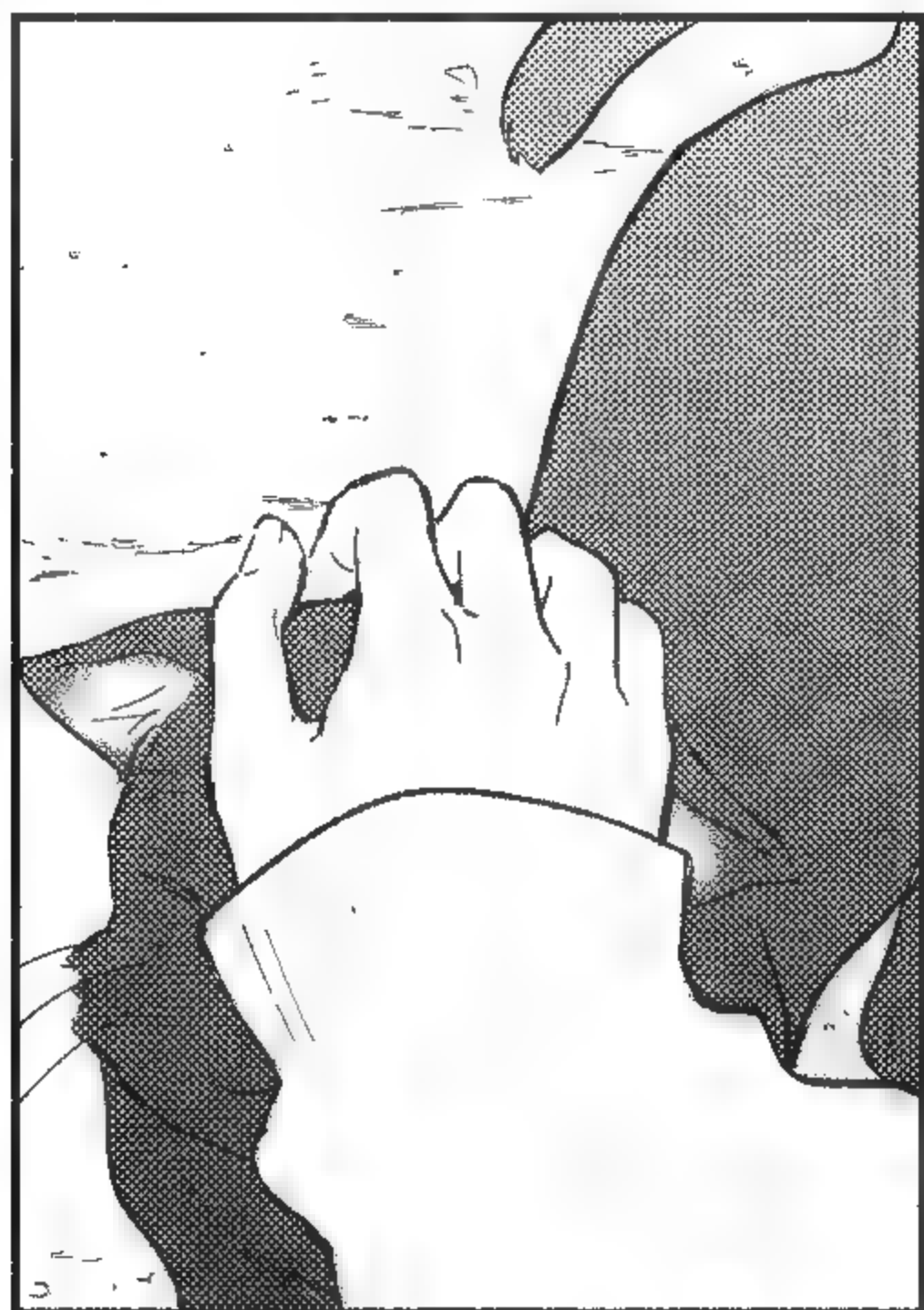
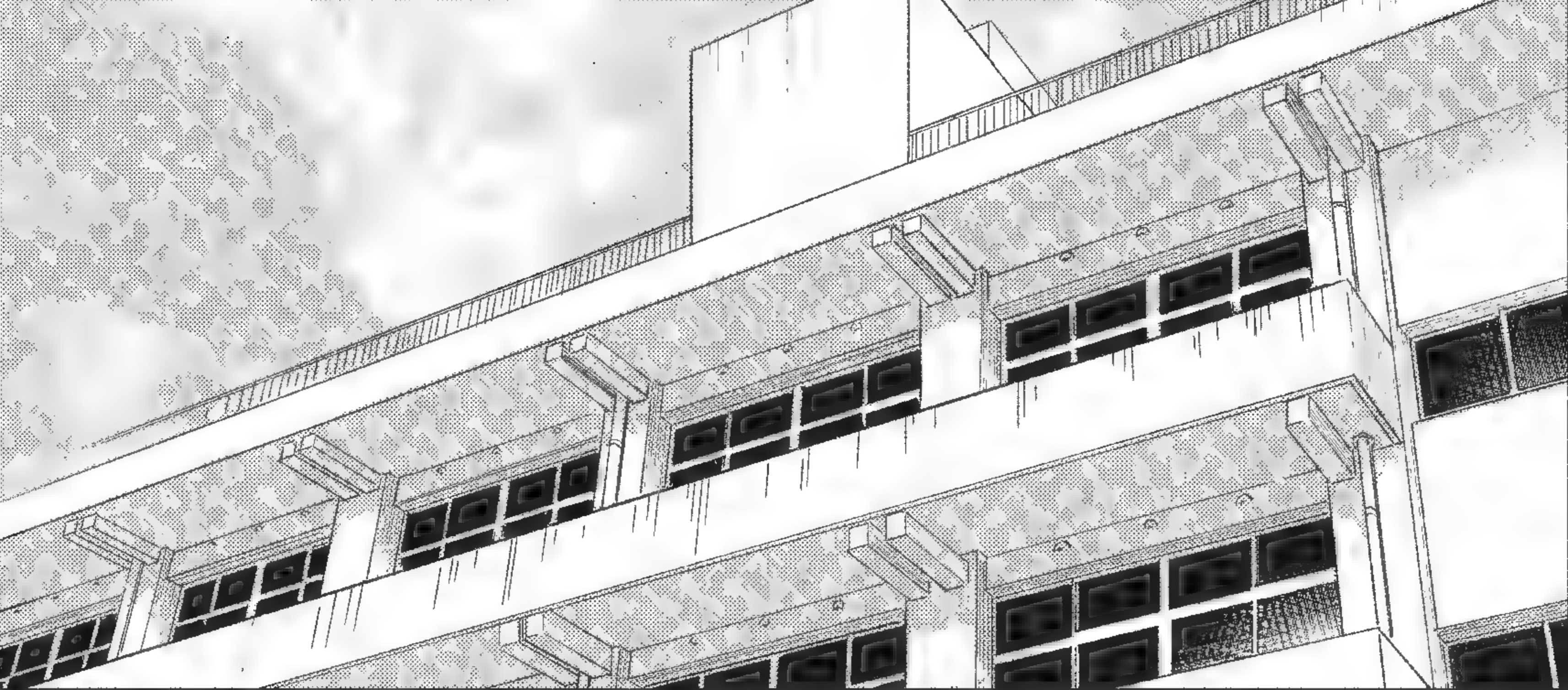


I THOUGHT
THAT I WAS
NORMAL.



I'M
OUT OF
BODY WASH!
BRING ME
SOME FROM
UP ON THE
SHELF!







MMYEAHHH...
MY THOUGHTS
ARE ALL
MIXED UP
RIGHT NOW...

YOUR
AURA OF
NEGATIVITY
FEELS
LIKE IT'S
SPREADING.

Stay
away!



KURO-
CHANS.*

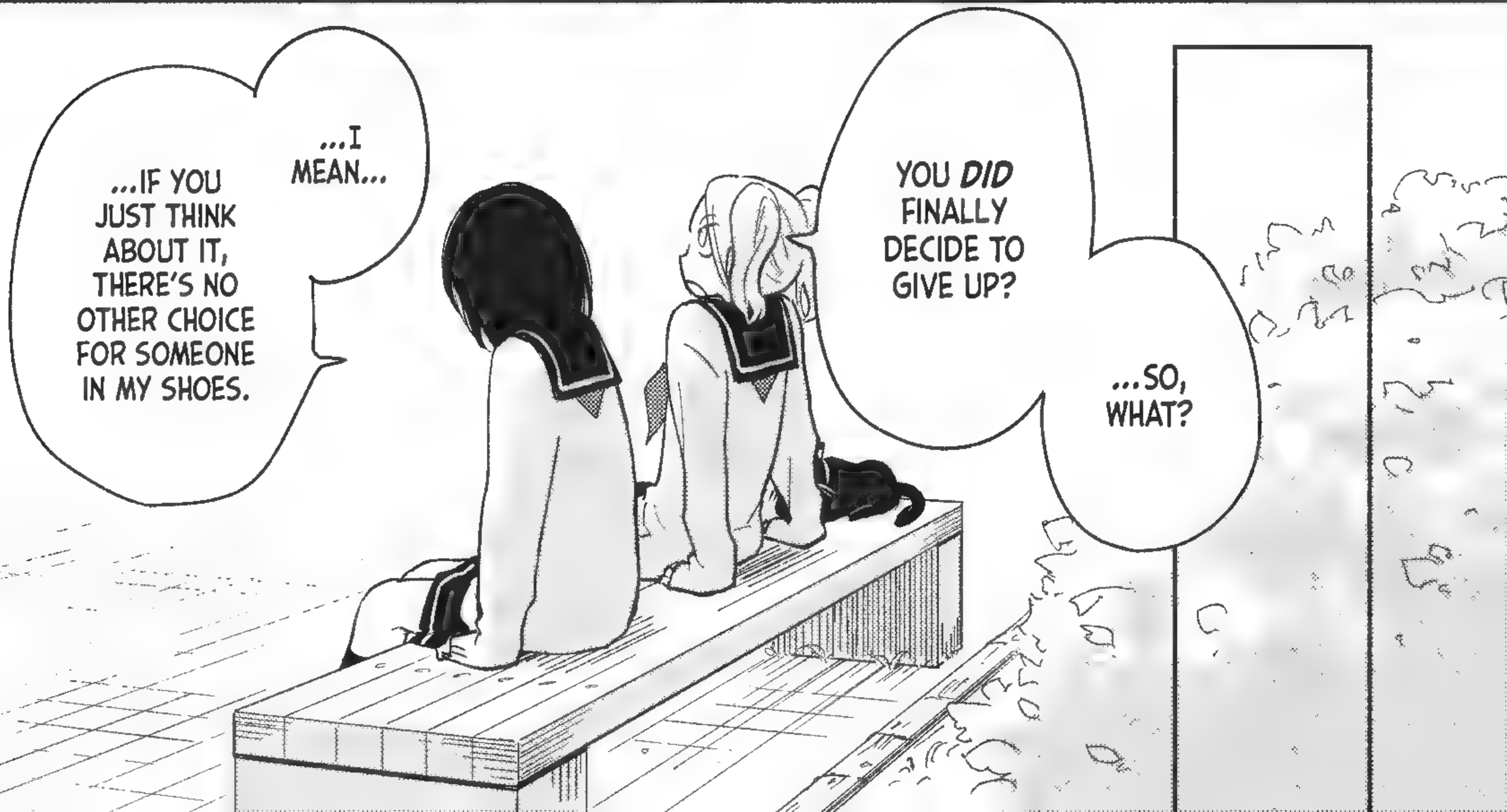
AH...

*IN JAPANESE, "KURO" IS THE COLOR BLACK.



THE MORE
I GET CAUGHT
UP IN IT...

IT'S
NO GOOD...
THE MORE I TRY
TO MAKE UP MY
MIND ABOUT
GIVING UP...

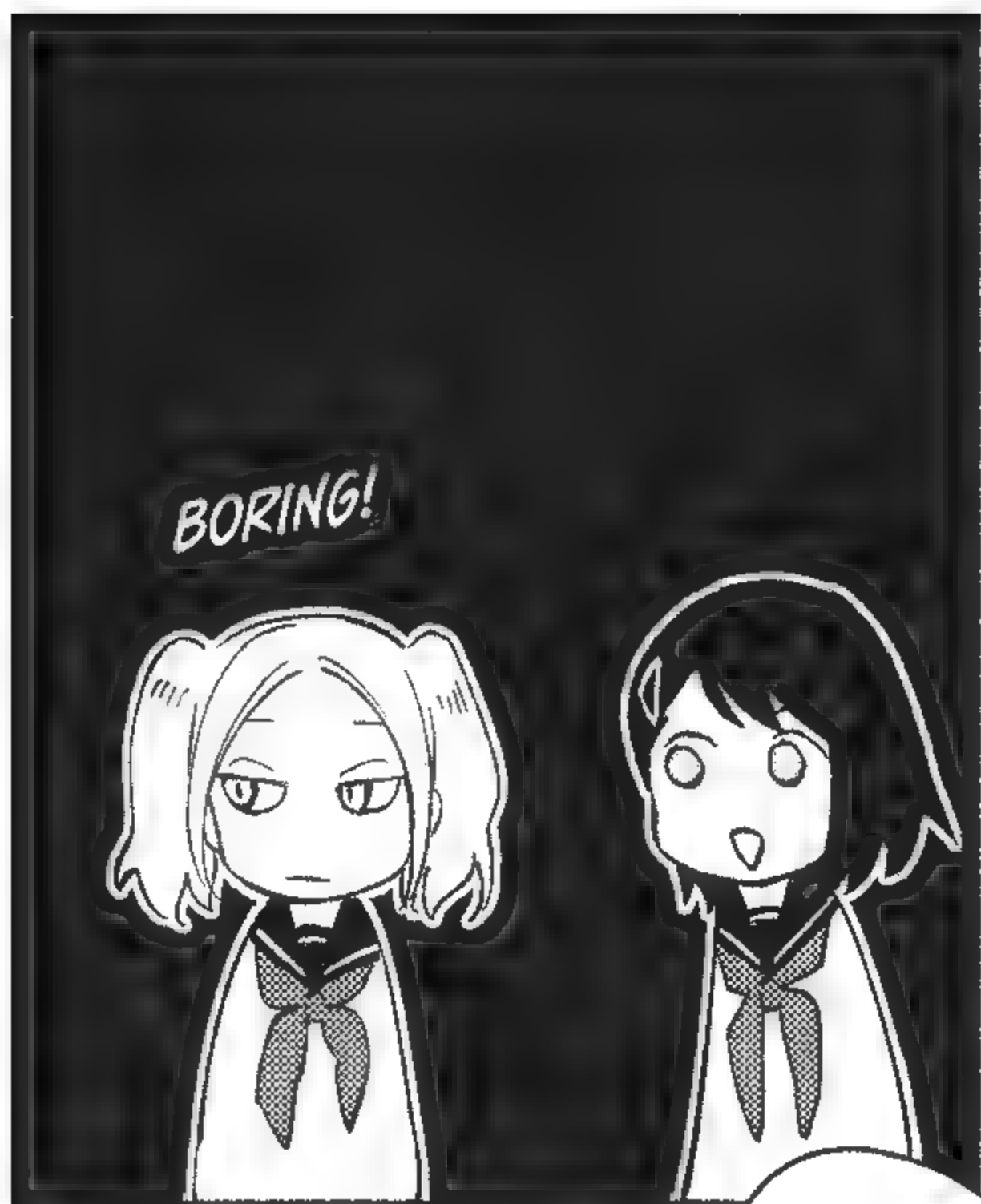


...IF YOU
JUST THINK
ABOUT IT,
THERE'S NO
OTHER CHOICE
FOR SOMEONE
IN MY SHOES.

...I
MEAN...

YOU **DID**
FINALLY
DECIDE TO
GIVE UP?

...SO,
WHAT?



BORING!



I WAS NEVER WORRIED.

I SHOULDN'T DRAG THIS OUT ANY LONGER AND KEEP MAKING YOU WORRY, TOO, KURO-CHAN.

I really did want you to cross that perilous bridge.

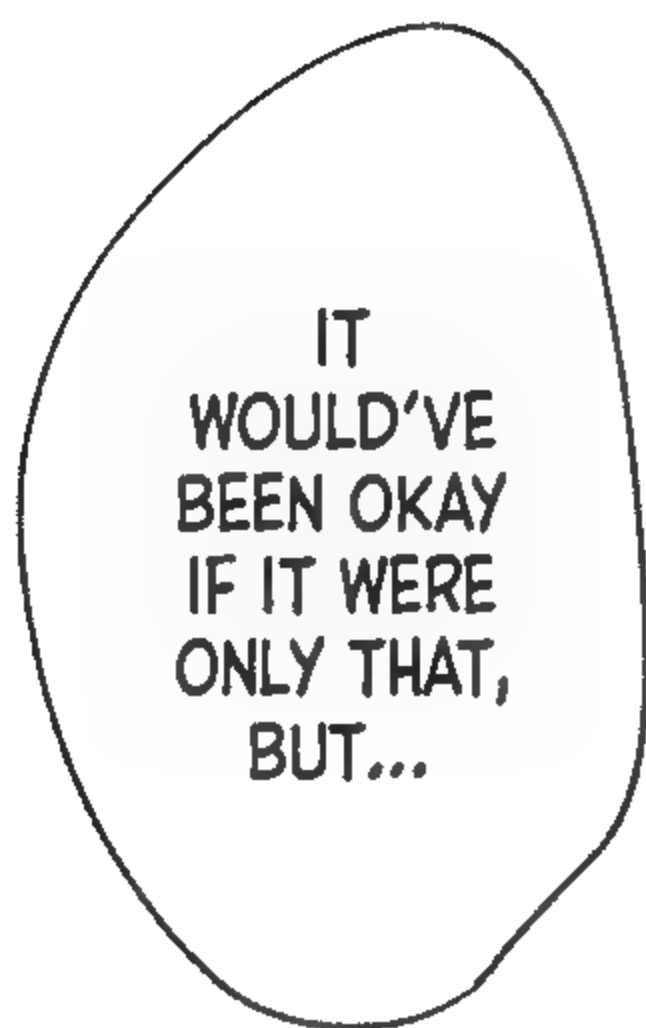


WHICH... I'M STARTING TO FEEL IS A PRETTY BAD SETUP IF I WANT TO SORT MY FEELINGS OUT.

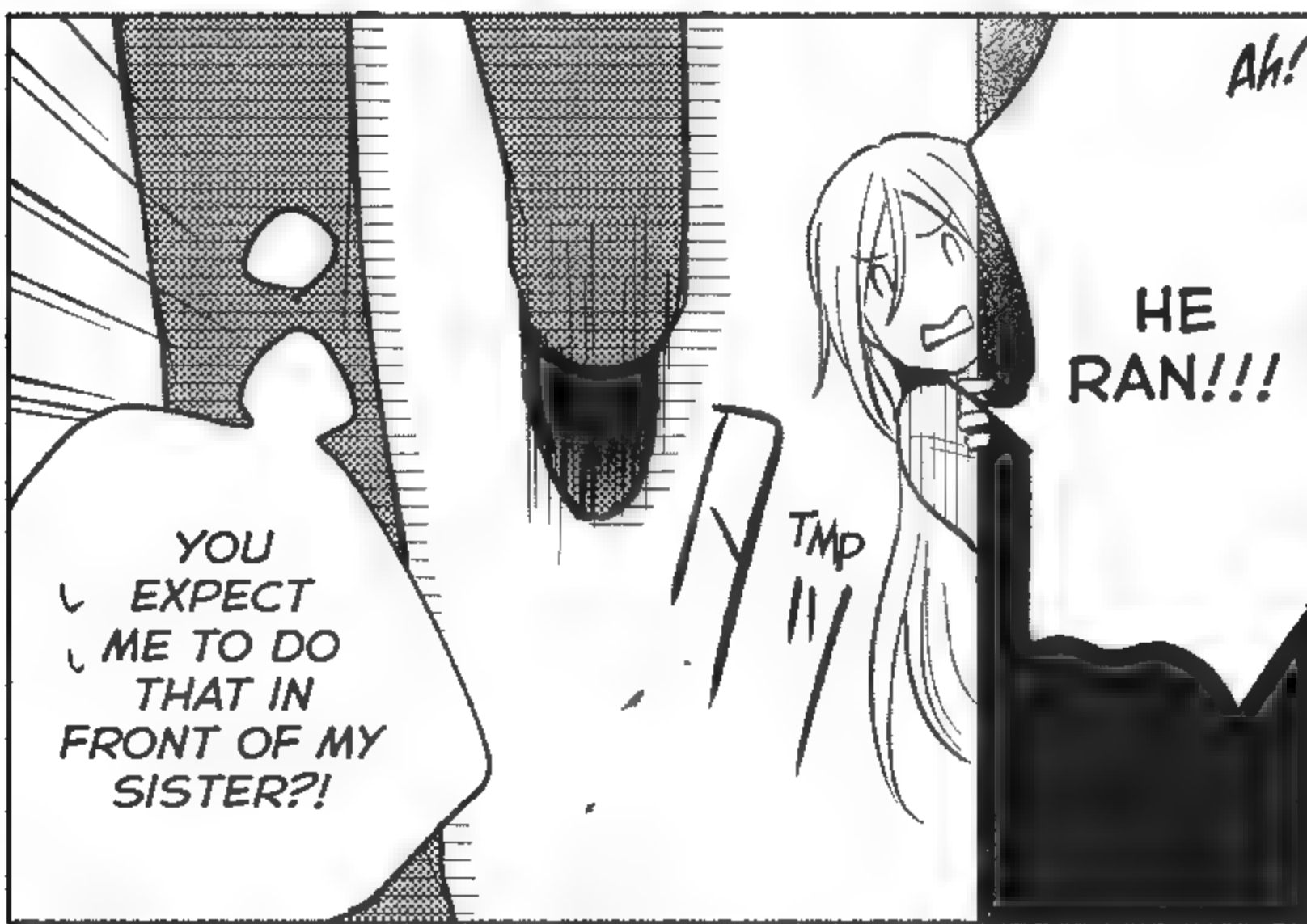
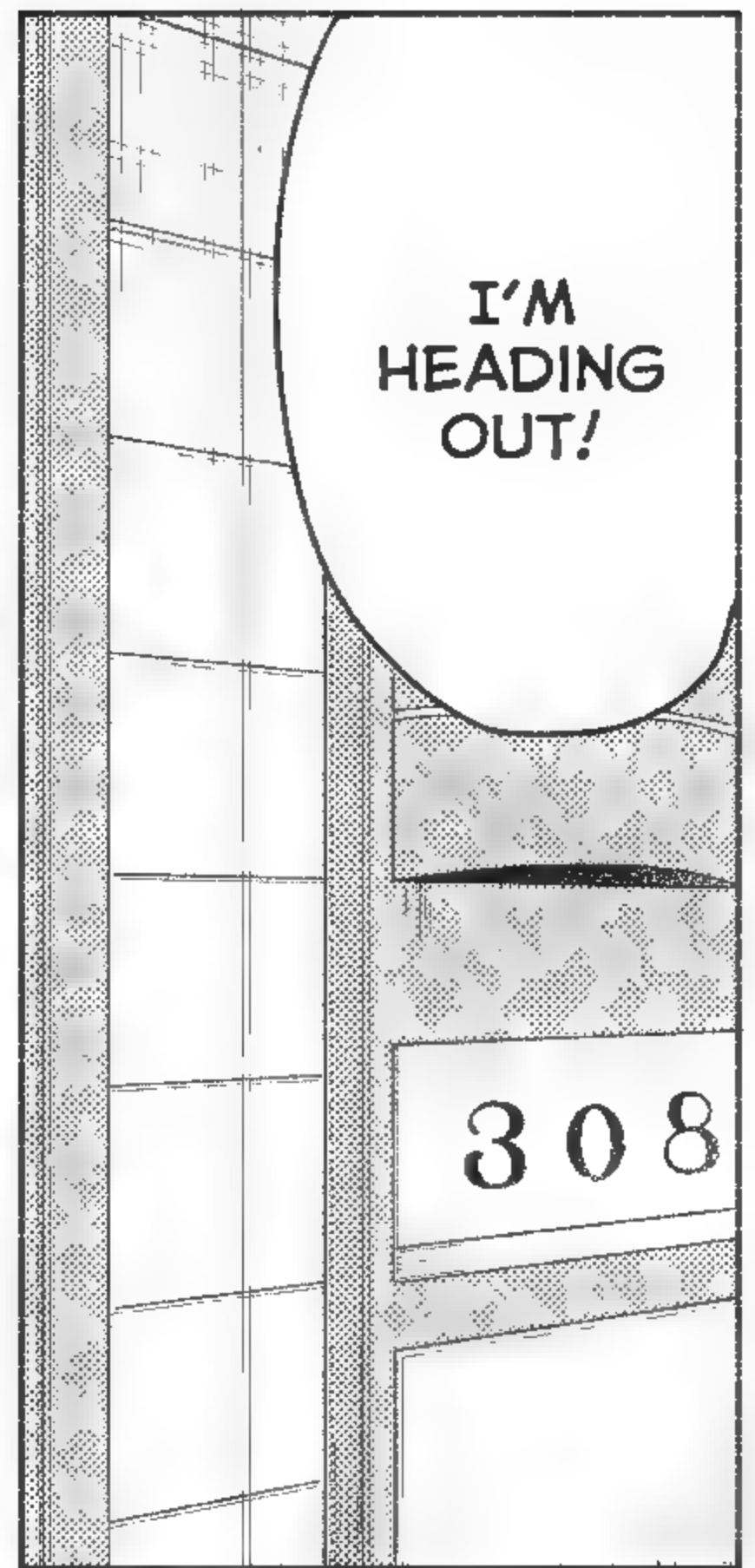
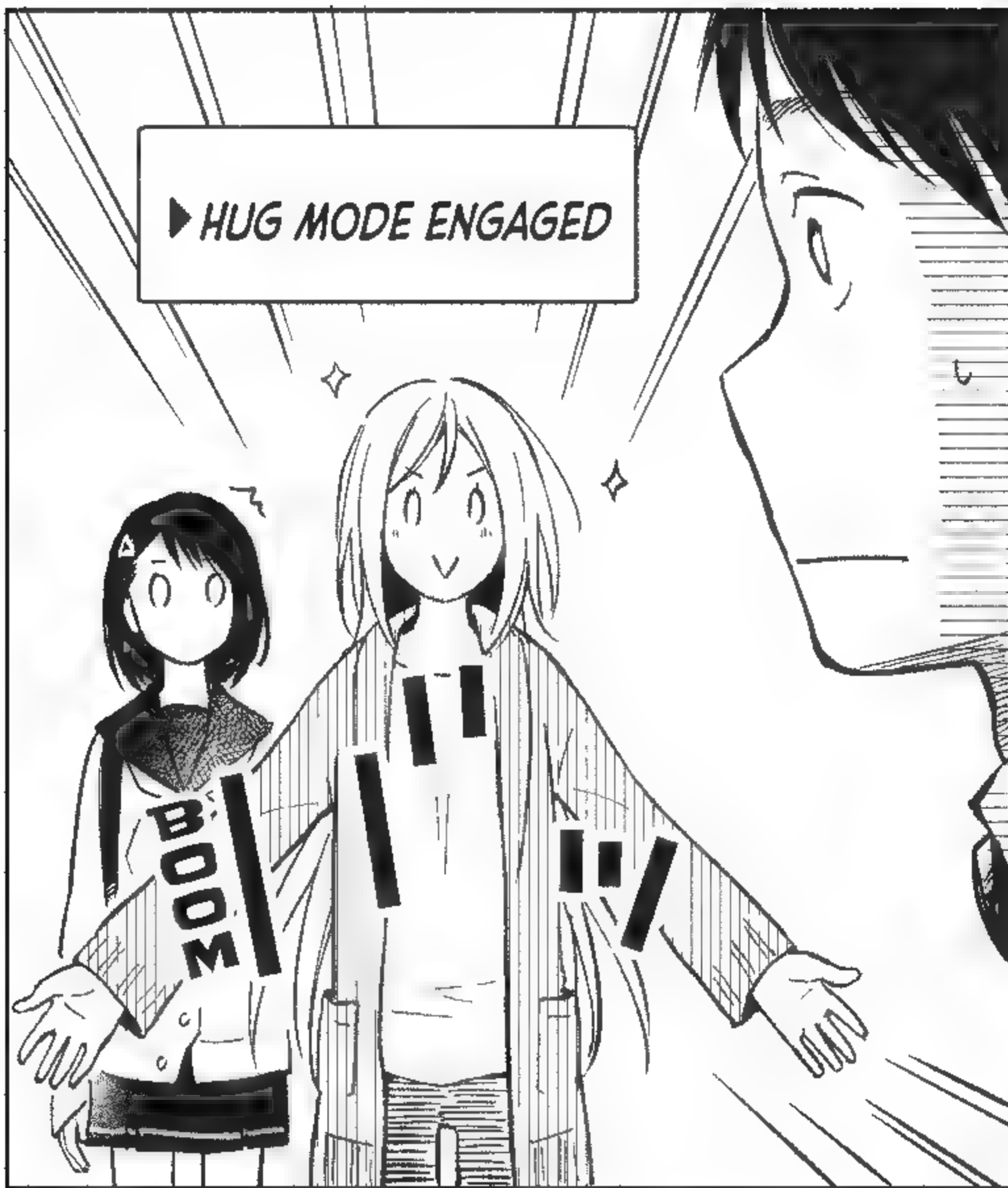
WELL... ANYWAY, WE ARE LIVING TOGETHER.

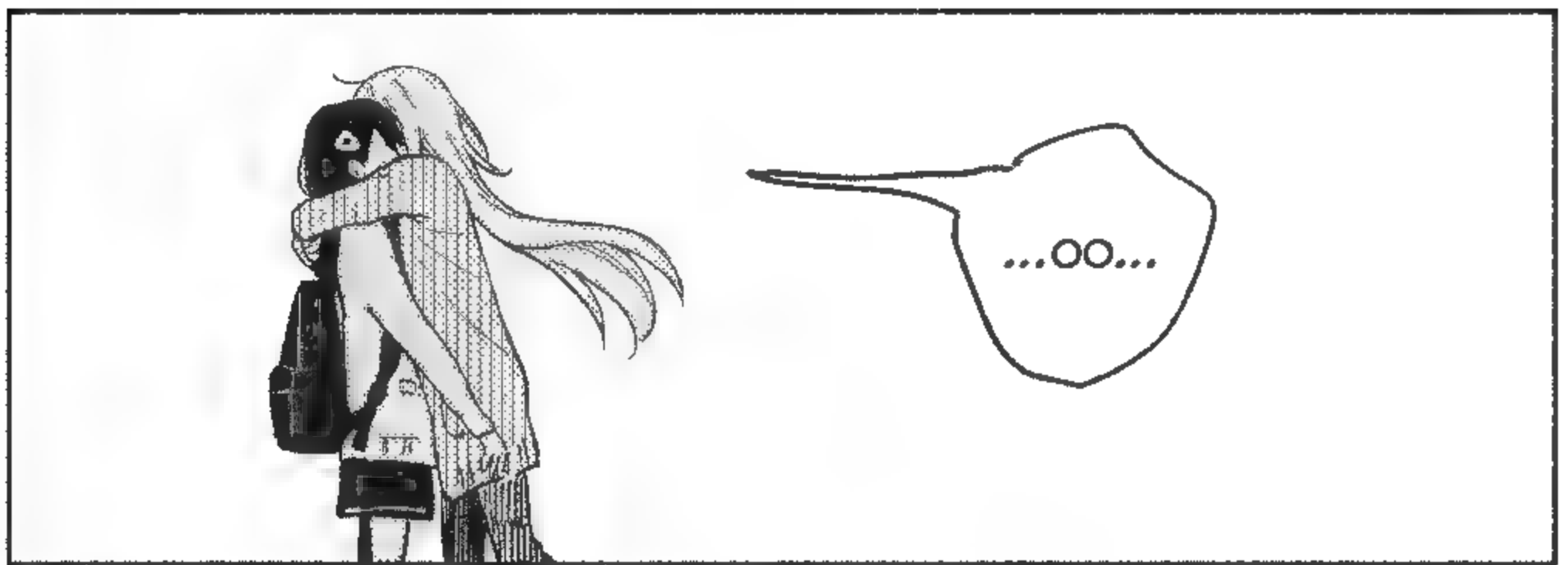
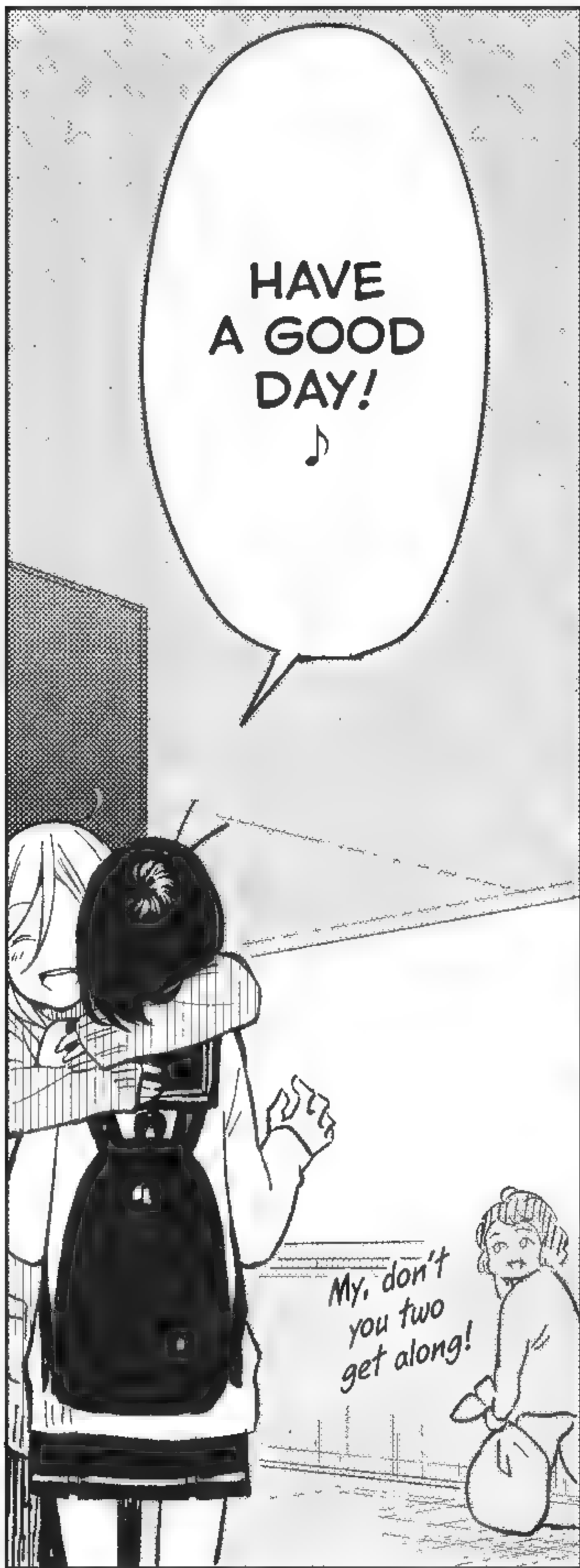


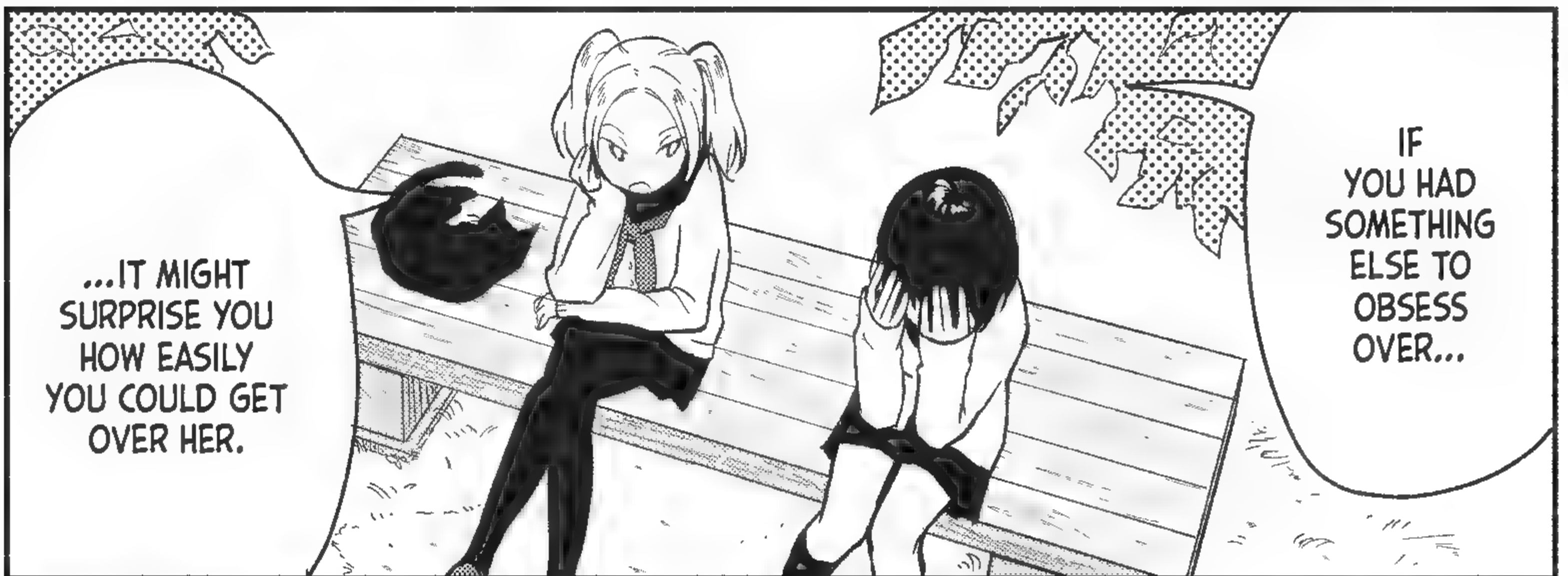
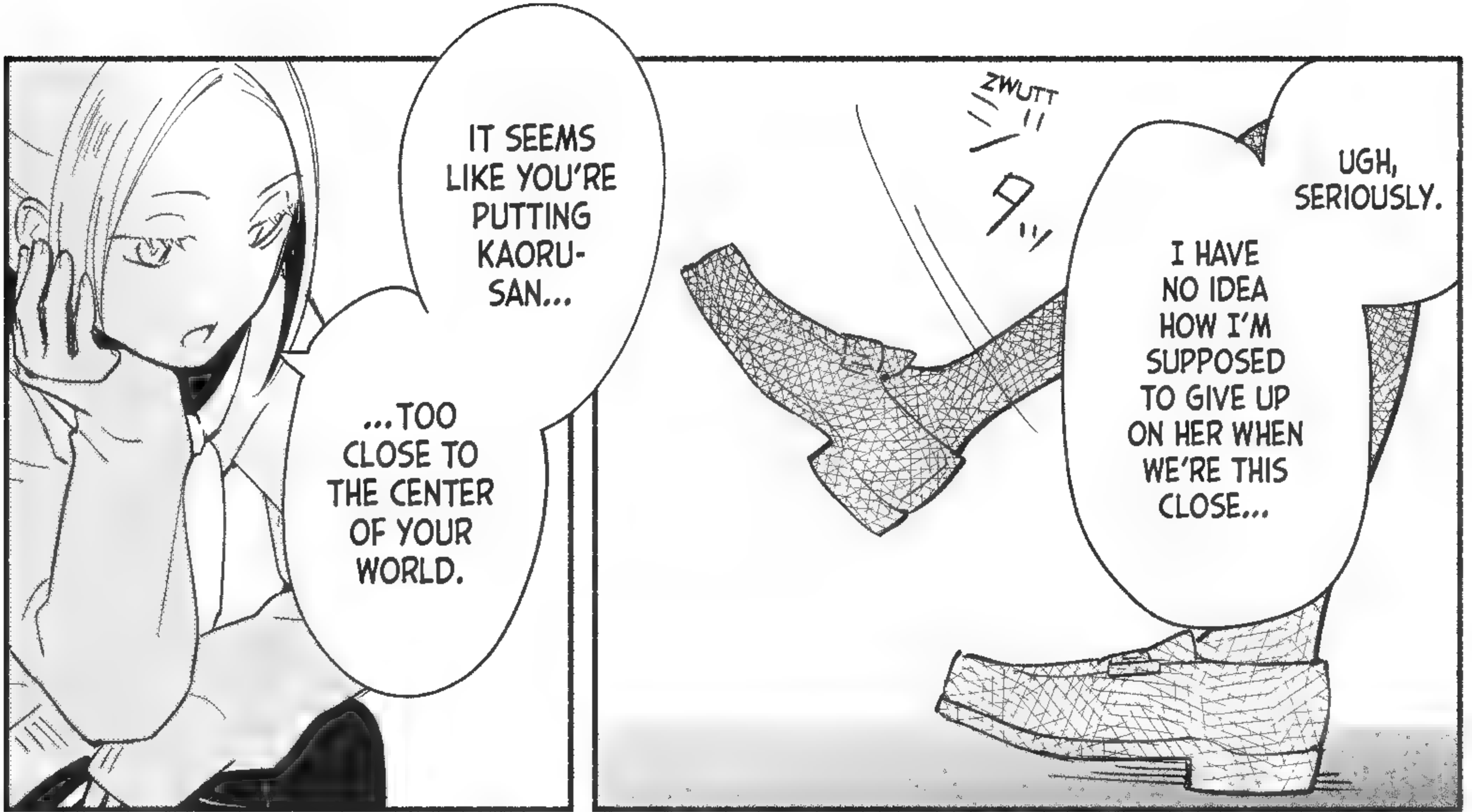
YEAH, YOU HAVE TO SEE HER FACE EVERY DAY, EVEN IF YOU DON'T WANT TO.

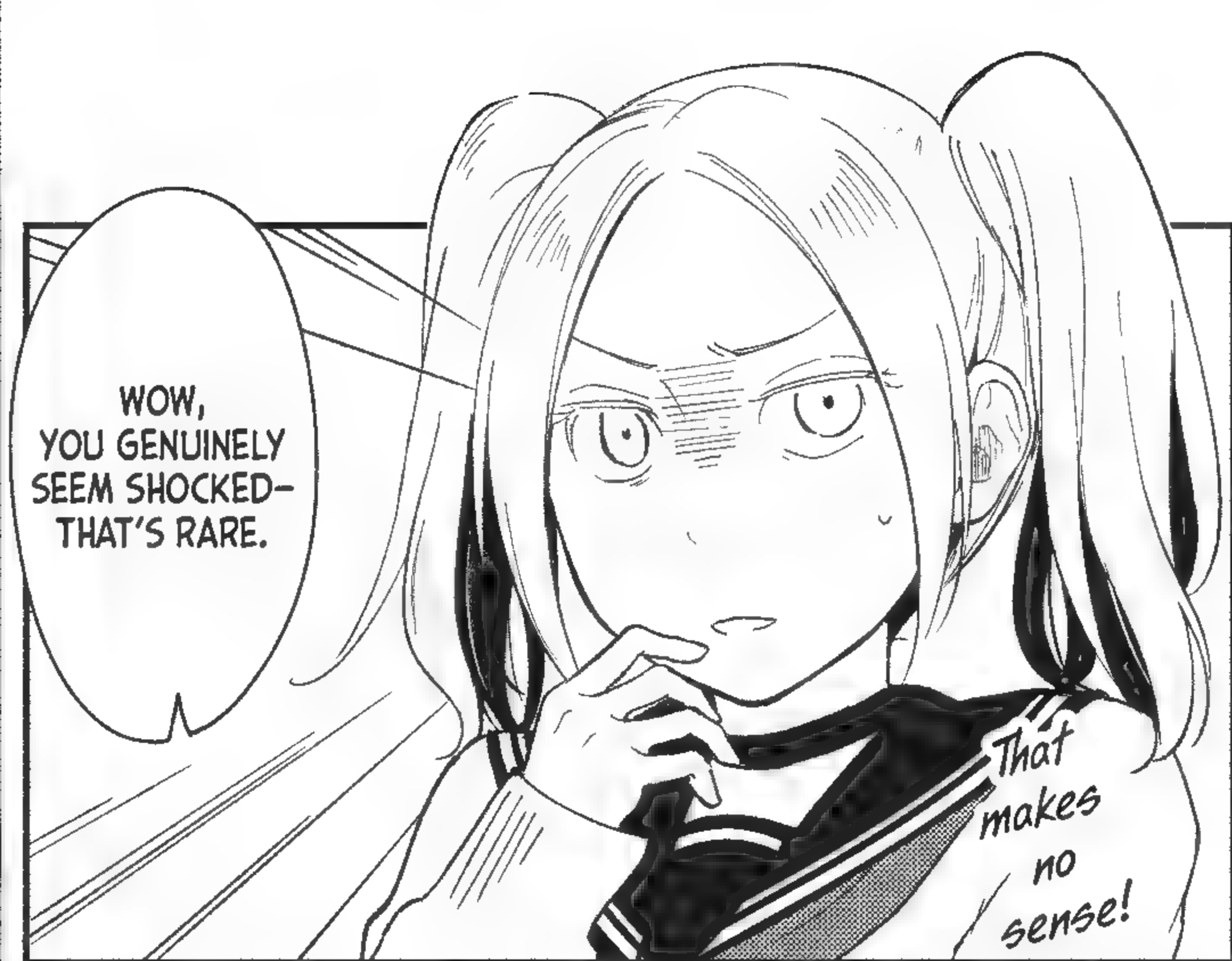


IT WOULD'VE BEEN OKAY IF IT WERE ONLY THAT, BUT...









WOW,
YOU GENUINELY
SEEM SHOCKED-
THAT'S RARE.

*That
makes
no
sense!*



THAT'S WHAT
BECAME
APPARENT TO
ME AFTER ALL
THAT.

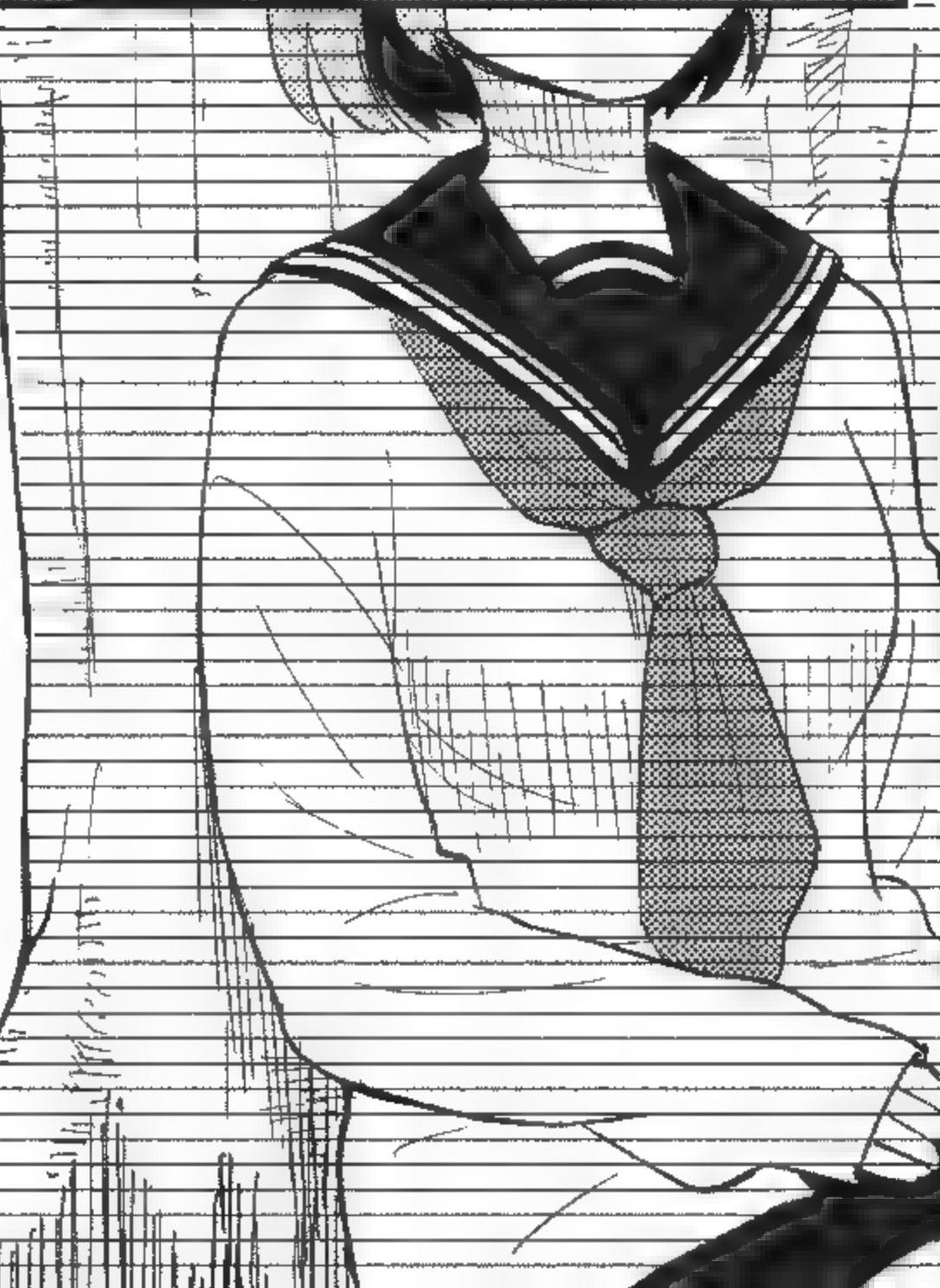
...NO
MATTER
WHAT I DO,
ALL I
CAN SEEM
TO THINK
ABOUT IS
KAORU-
SAN.



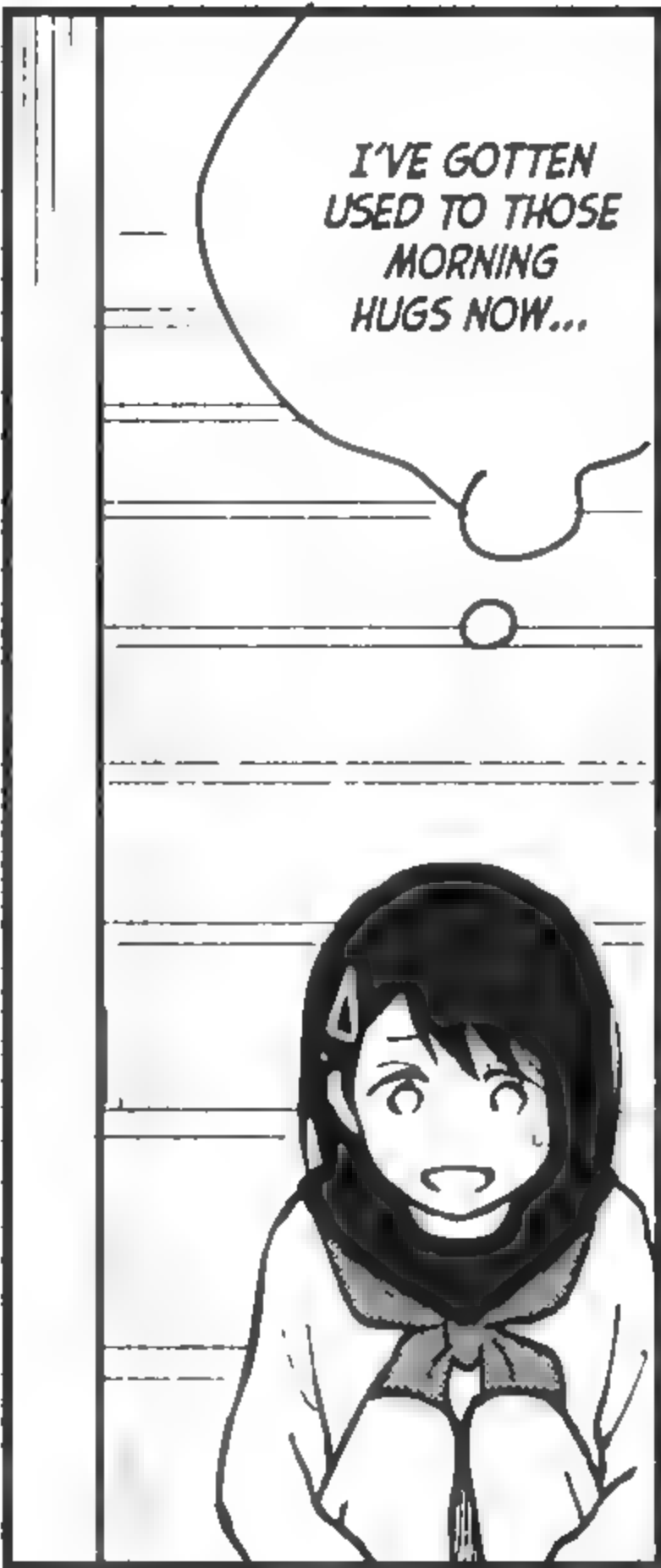
I'VE TRIED
ALL SORTS
OF THINGS
TO DISTRACT
MYSELF...

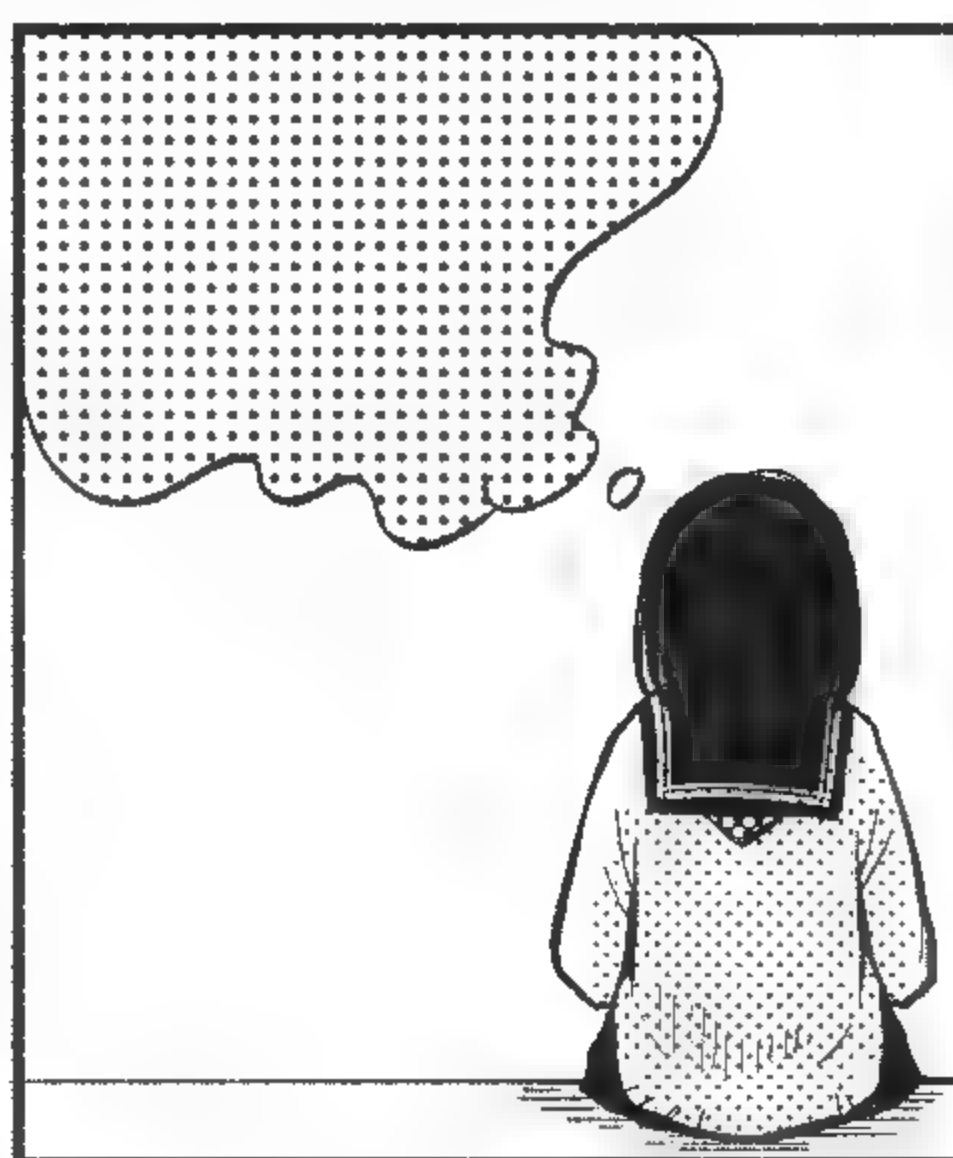


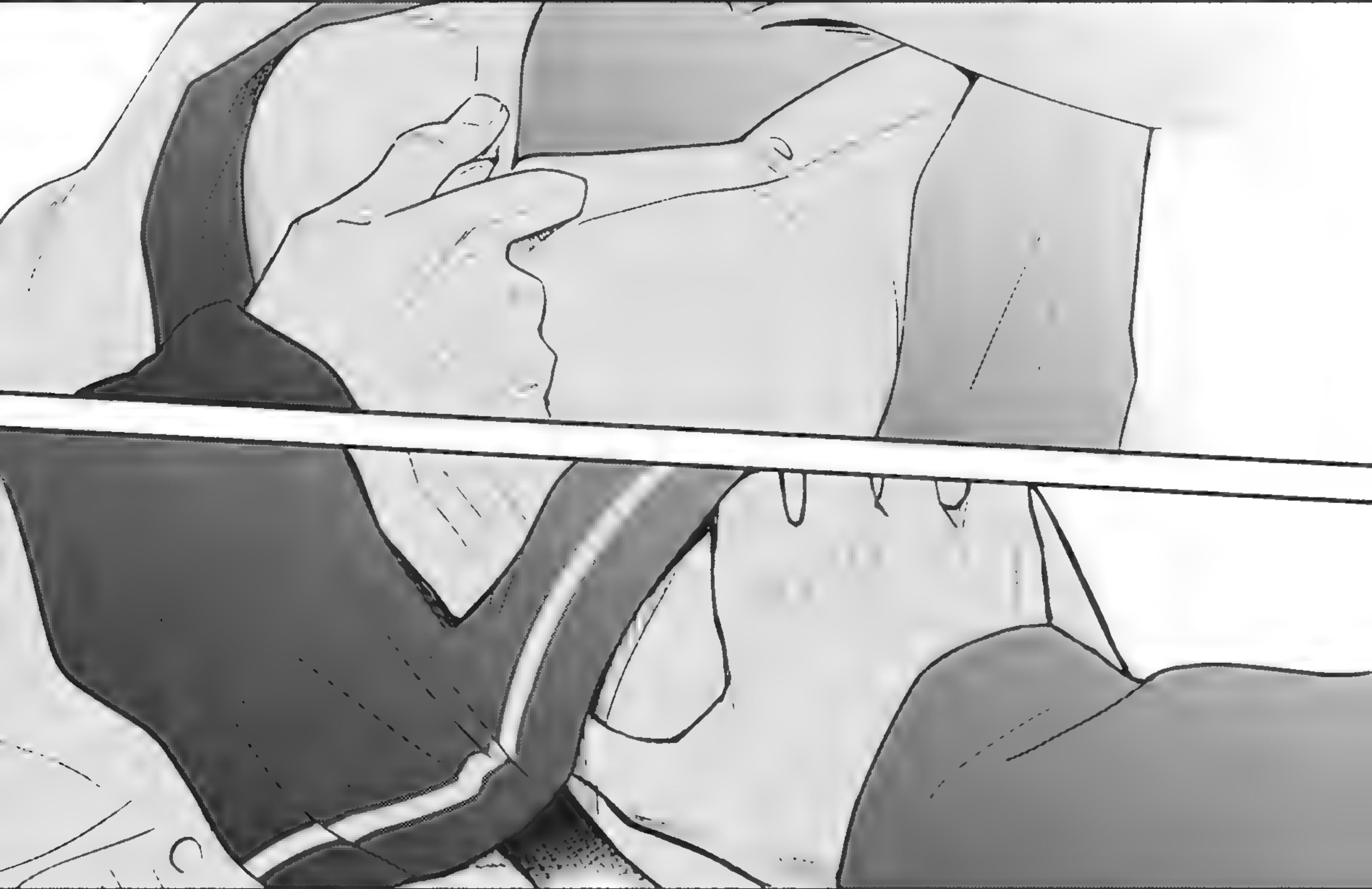
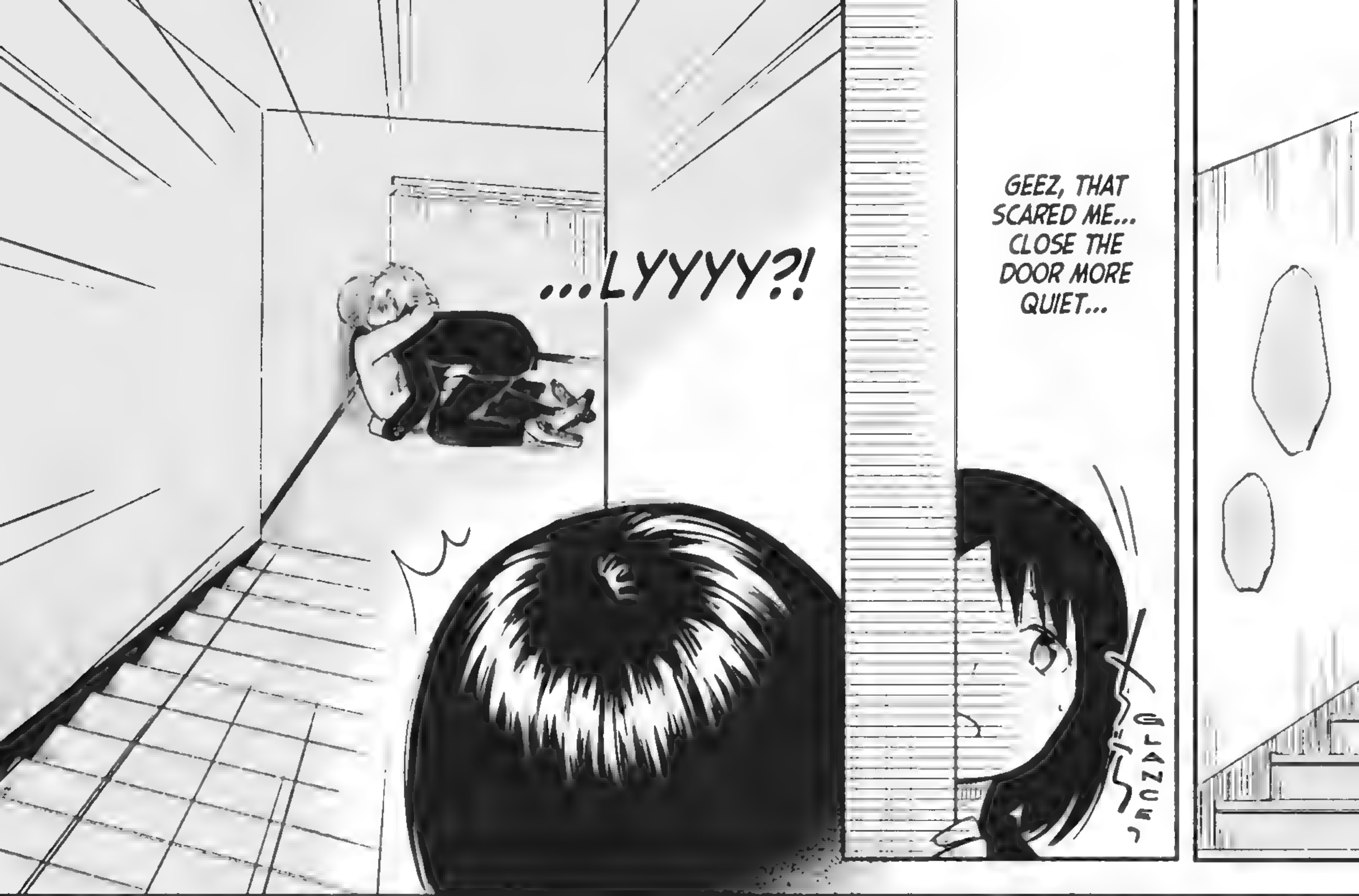
THAT
SUCKS.

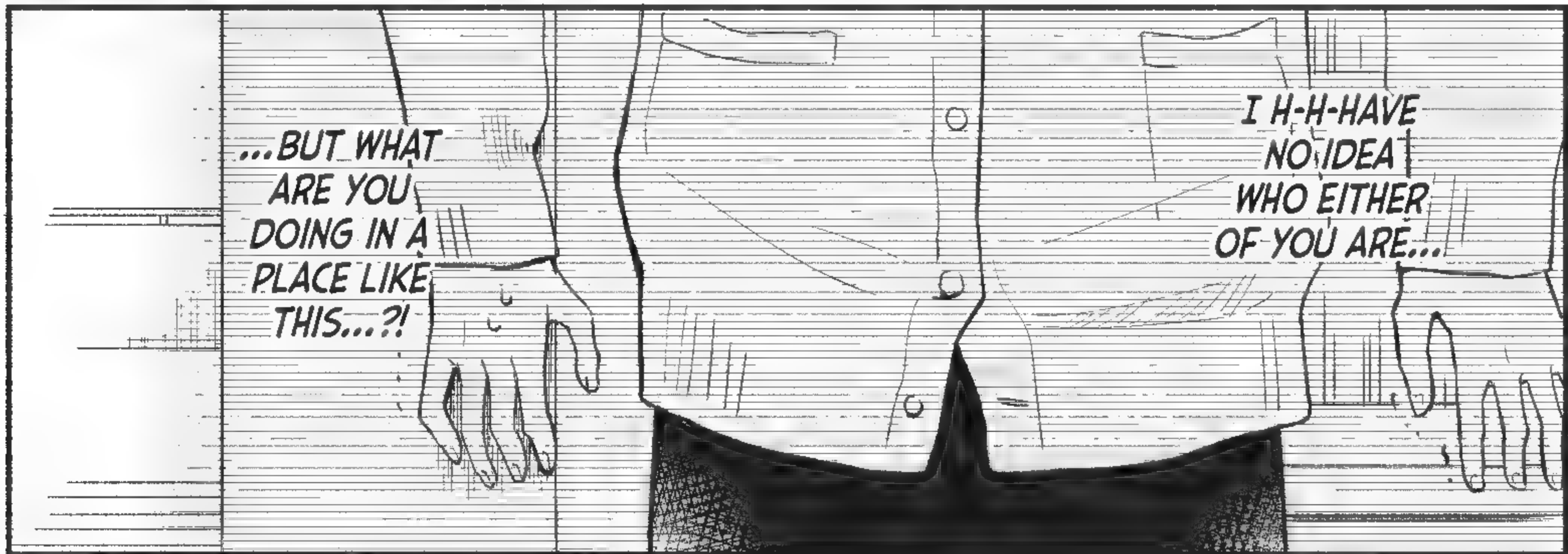
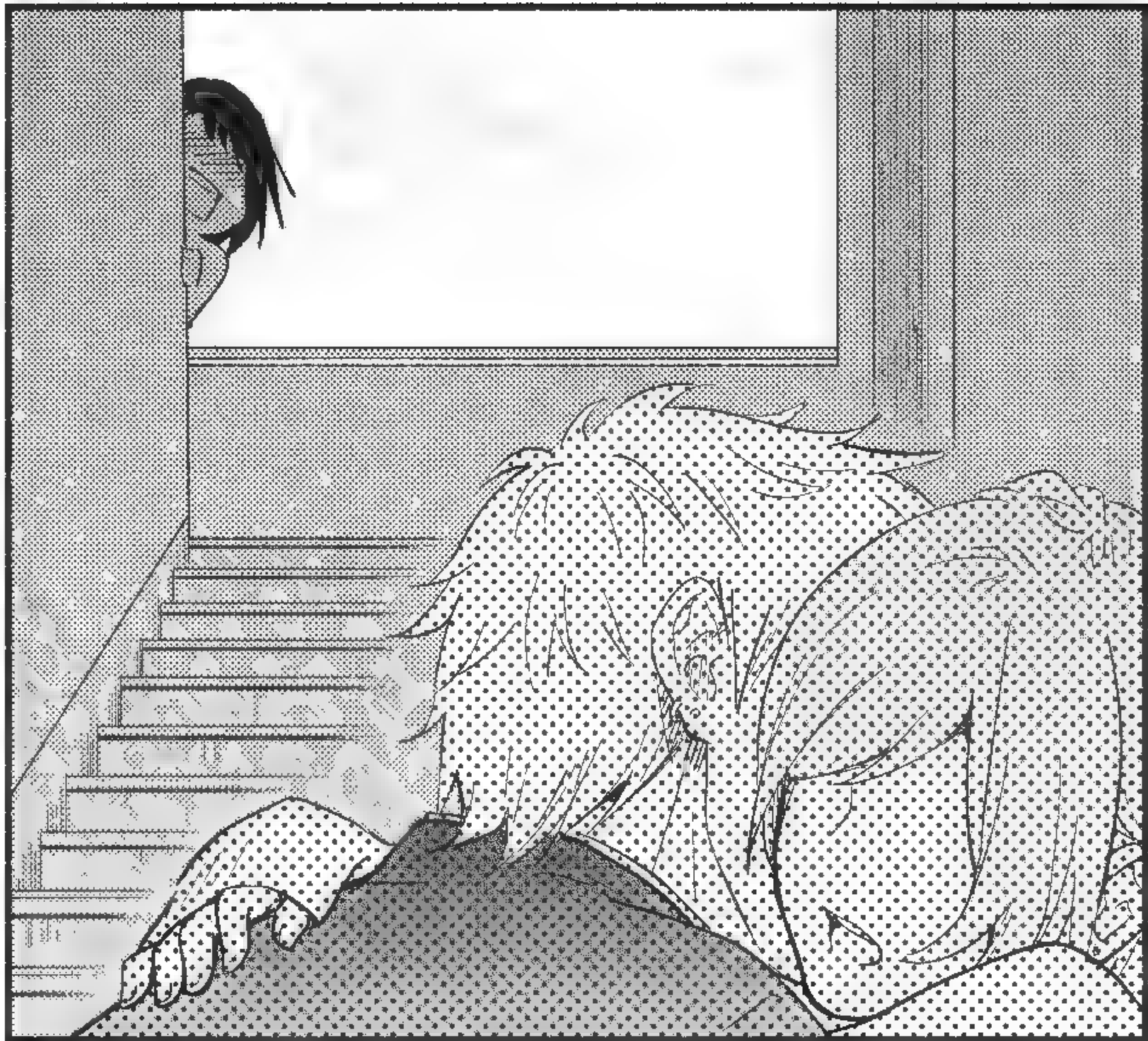


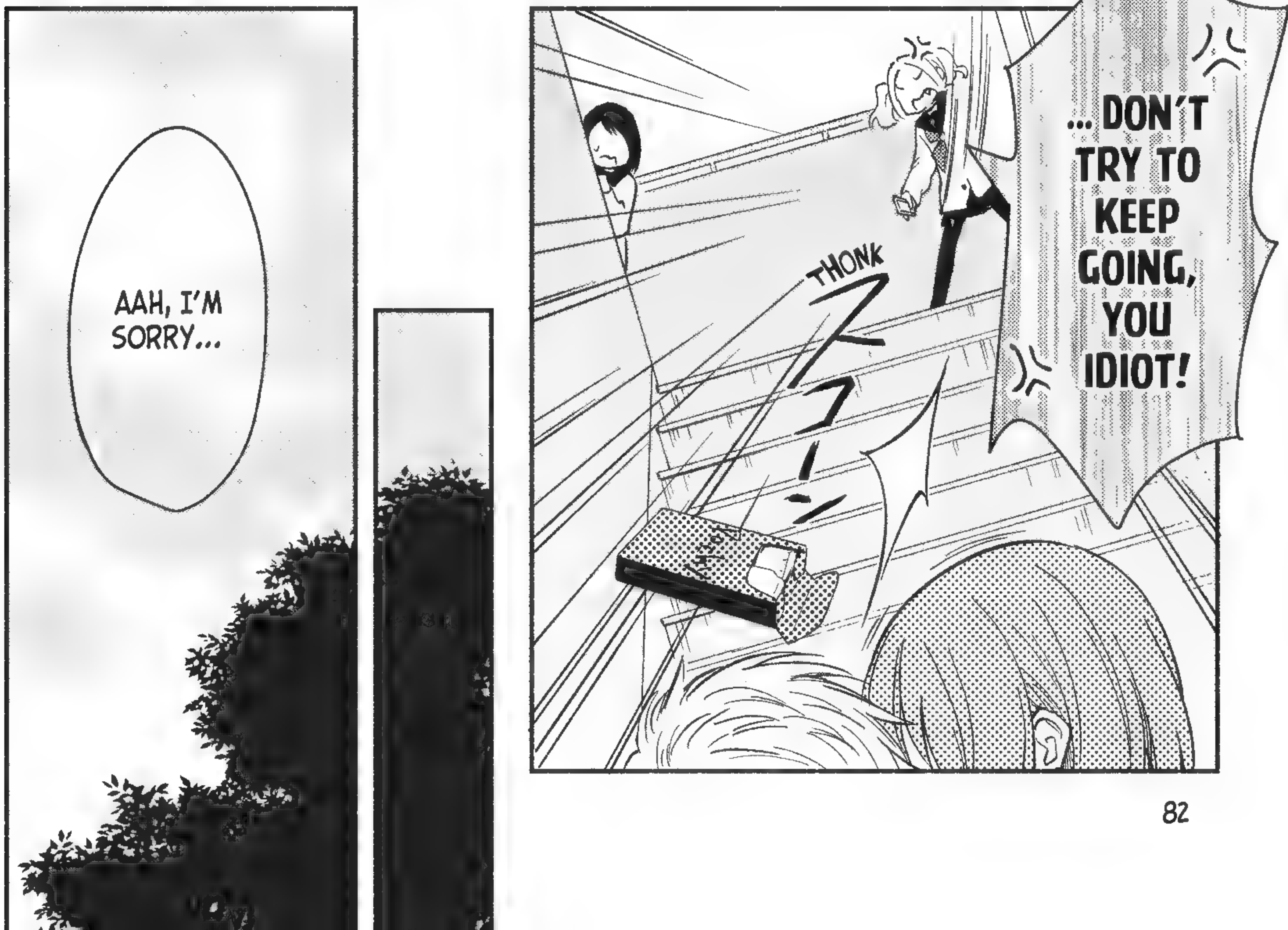
...BUT
IN THE
END...



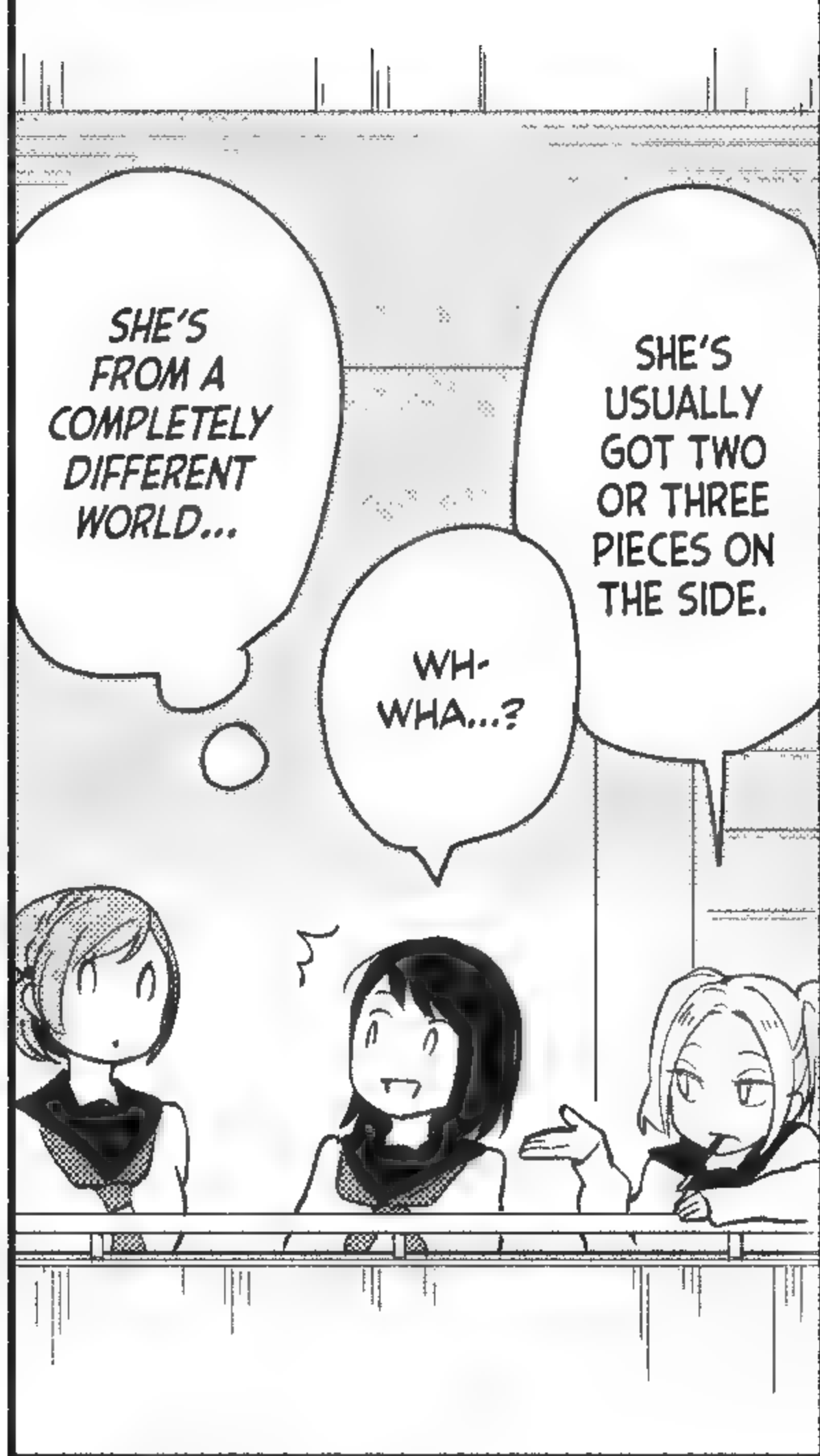








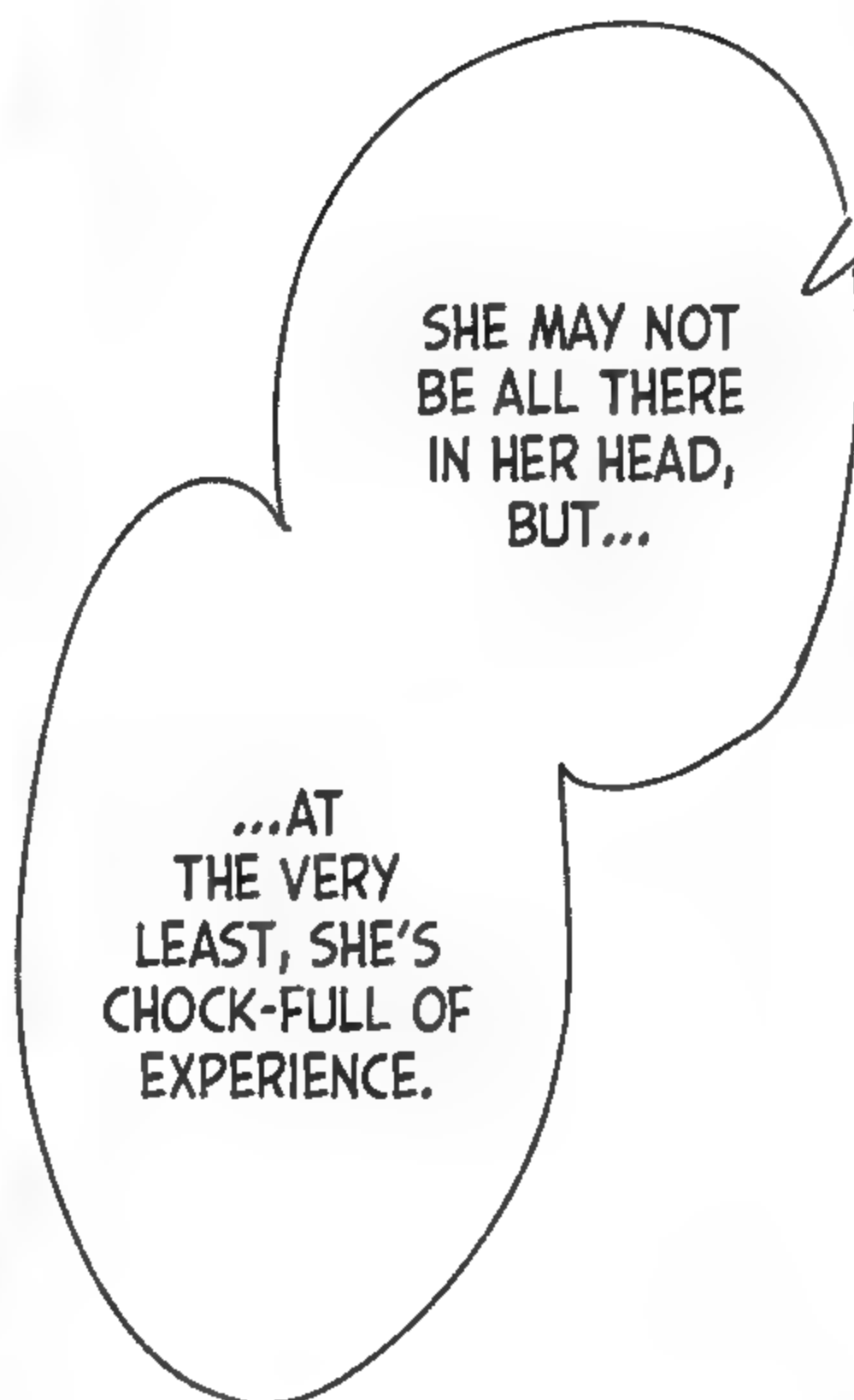




SHE'S FROM A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT WORLD...

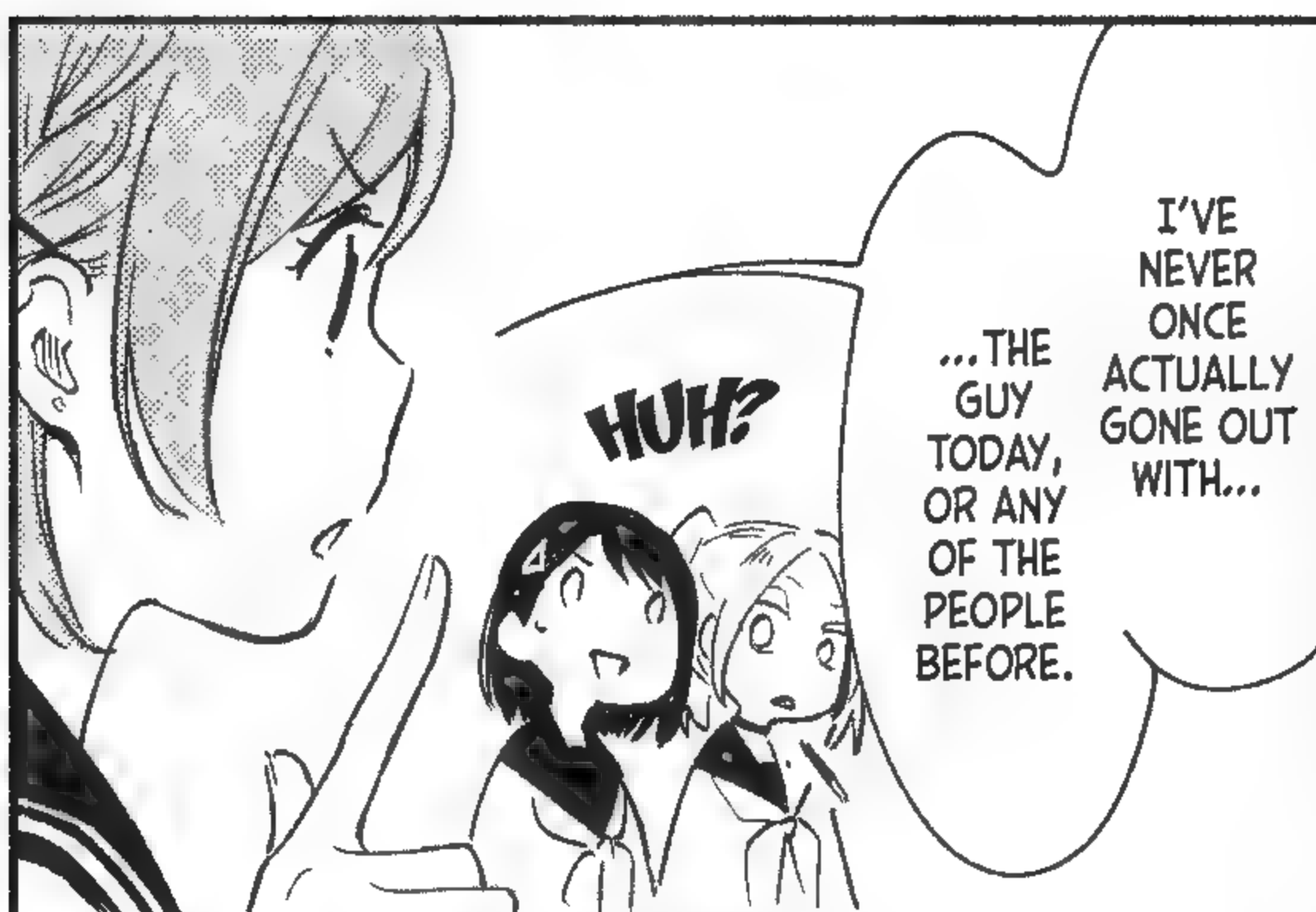
WH-WHA...?

SHE'S USUALLY GOT TWO OR THREE PIECES ON THE SIDE.



SHE MAY NOT BE ALL THERE IN HER HEAD, BUT...

...AT THE VERY LEAST, SHE'S CHOCK-FULL OF EXPERIENCE.



HUH?

I'VE NEVER ONCE ACTUALLY GONE OUT WITH...
...THE GUY TODAY, OR ANY OF THE PEOPLE BEFORE.



IF YOU NEVER AGREED TO BE IN A CONTRACT WITH A LOVER, THEN IT ISN'T REALLY MOON-LIGHTING, NOW, IS IT?

Don't talk about it like it's a part-time job.

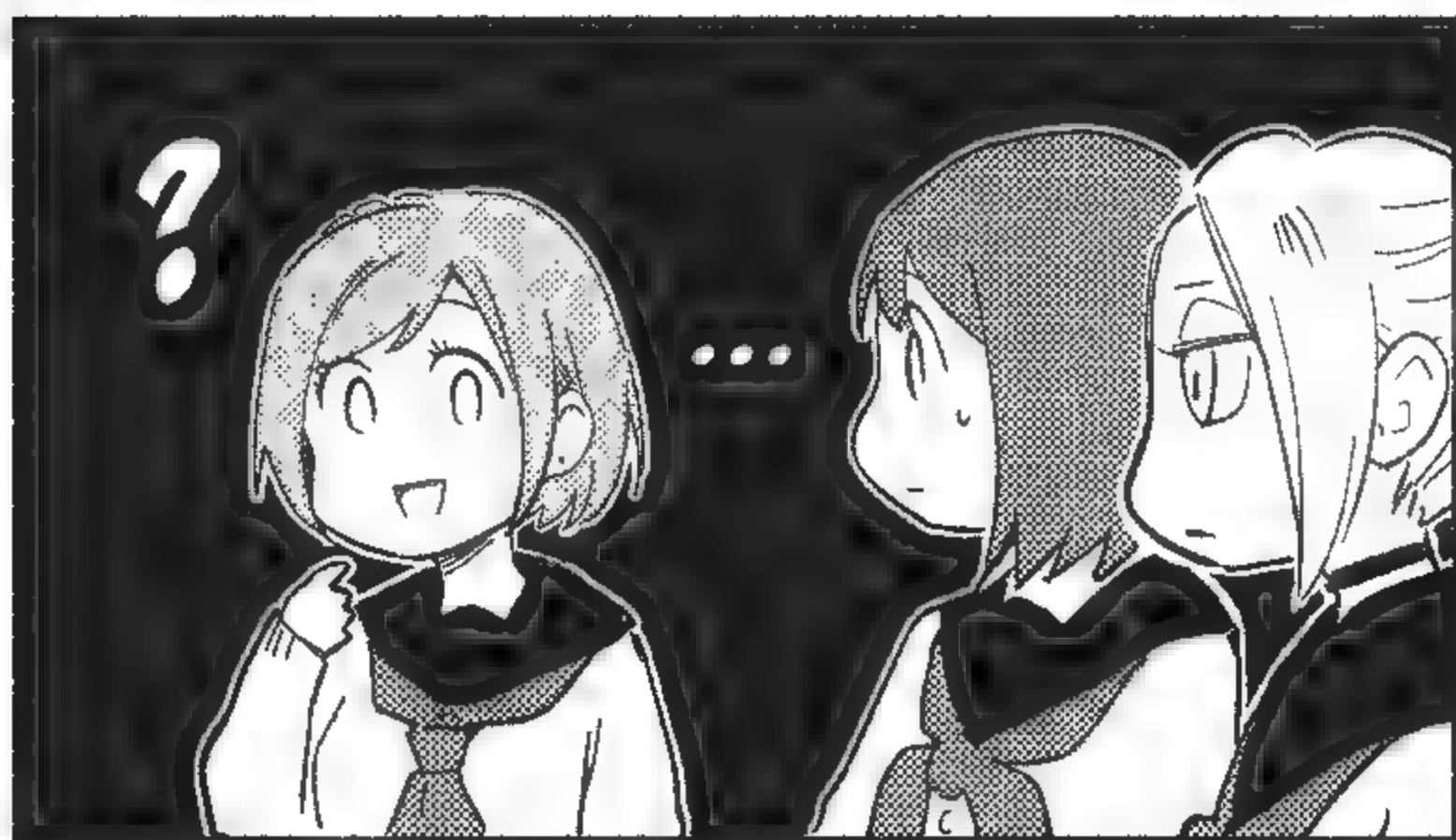


NOW JUST A SEC, CHLOE.*

SIGH

YOU'RE GETTING IT TWISTED THERE.

*IN JAPANESE, "CHLOE" IS PRONOUNCED "KUROÉ."





WHAT
DID YOU
JUST
SAAAY
?!



WHAT A
STRANGE
PERSON...

Whaaat?!

BUT I
WANNA
GET IN
ON DATING
GOSSIP,
TOO!

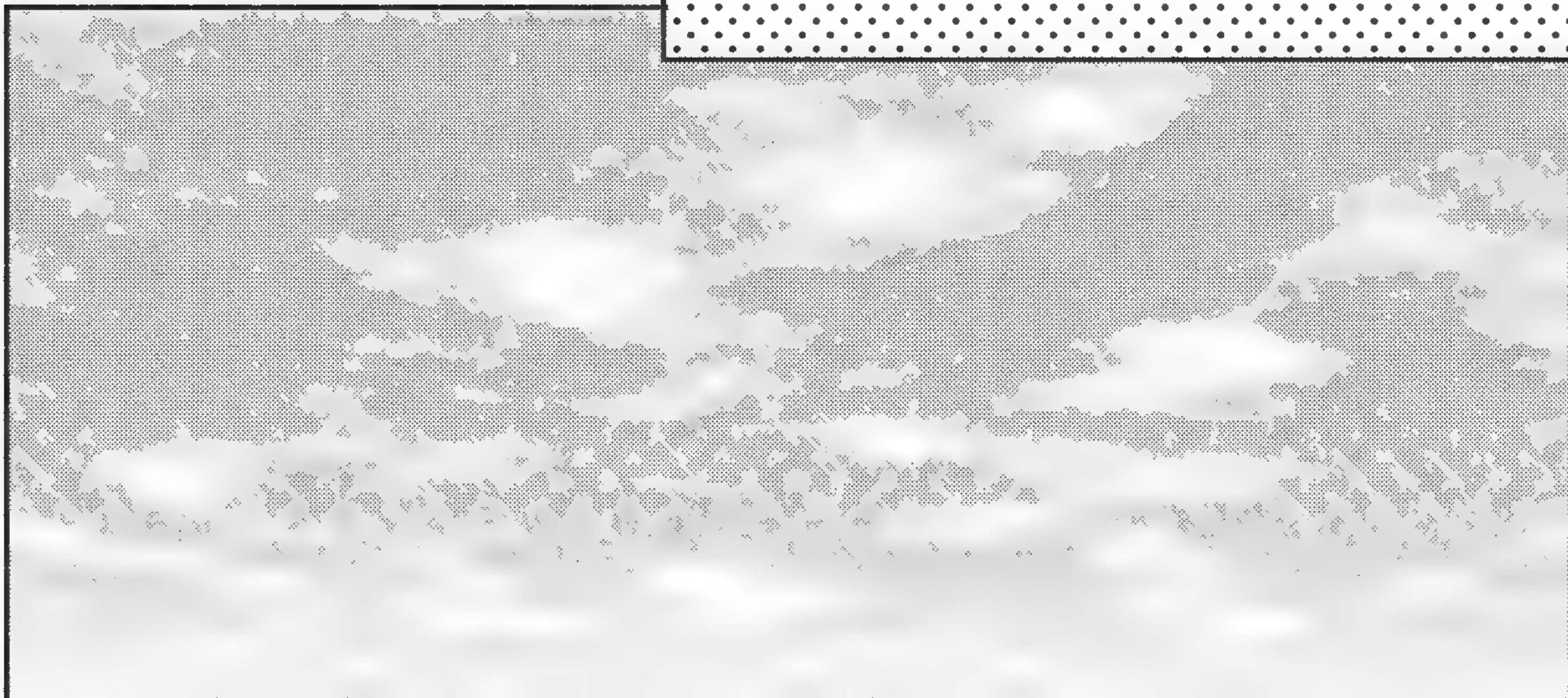
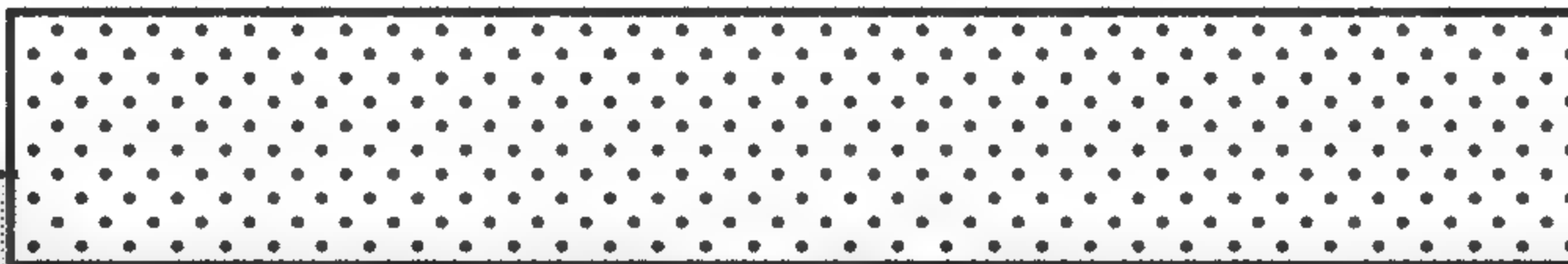
I never have!

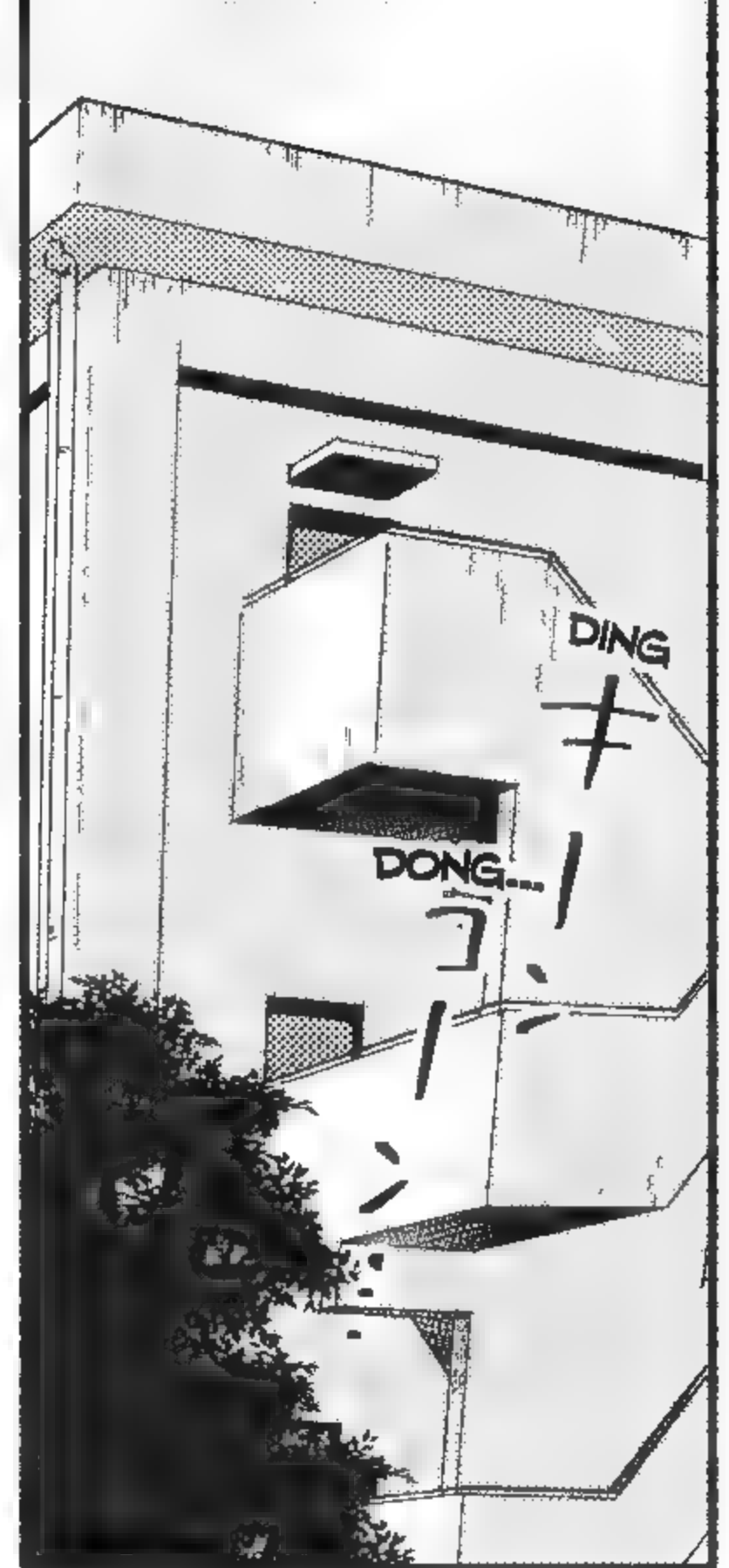
NO
THANK
YOU.

I THINK OUR
PATHS MAY BE
A BIT DIFFERENT,
SO PLEASE PAY
ME NO MIND...

MAYBE
YOU SHOULD
FIGURE OUT
WHAT TO
DO...

...WITH
YOUR
WARPED
SENSE
OF LOVE
FIRST?





Not exactly.

...INDEED.

OOH, I GET THAT!
PLACES LIKE THIS ARE LIKE
SECRET
HIDEAWAYS!

*This spot's
outta the
way, though.*

WELL,
YES.

I FEEL
CALM IN
QUIET
PLACES--OR,
RATHER,
PLACES
WITHOUT
PEOPLE...

DO YOU
COME HERE
A LOT DURING
BREAK?

I CAN'T
TELL HER
IT'S BECAUSE
SHE DOESN'T
SEEM LIKE THE
TYPE I COULD
GET CLOSE
TO.

WELL,
YOU SEEM
OLDER THAN
ME, SO
I JUST
NATURALLY...

*That's so
random!*

OH,
I UH...

ANYWAY,
WHY ARE
YOU BEING
SO FORMAL,
UTACCHI?*
WE'RE
SCHOOL-
MATES!

*"-CCHI" IS A COMMON SUFFIX FOR NICKNAMES.

HUH?!

Seriously?!

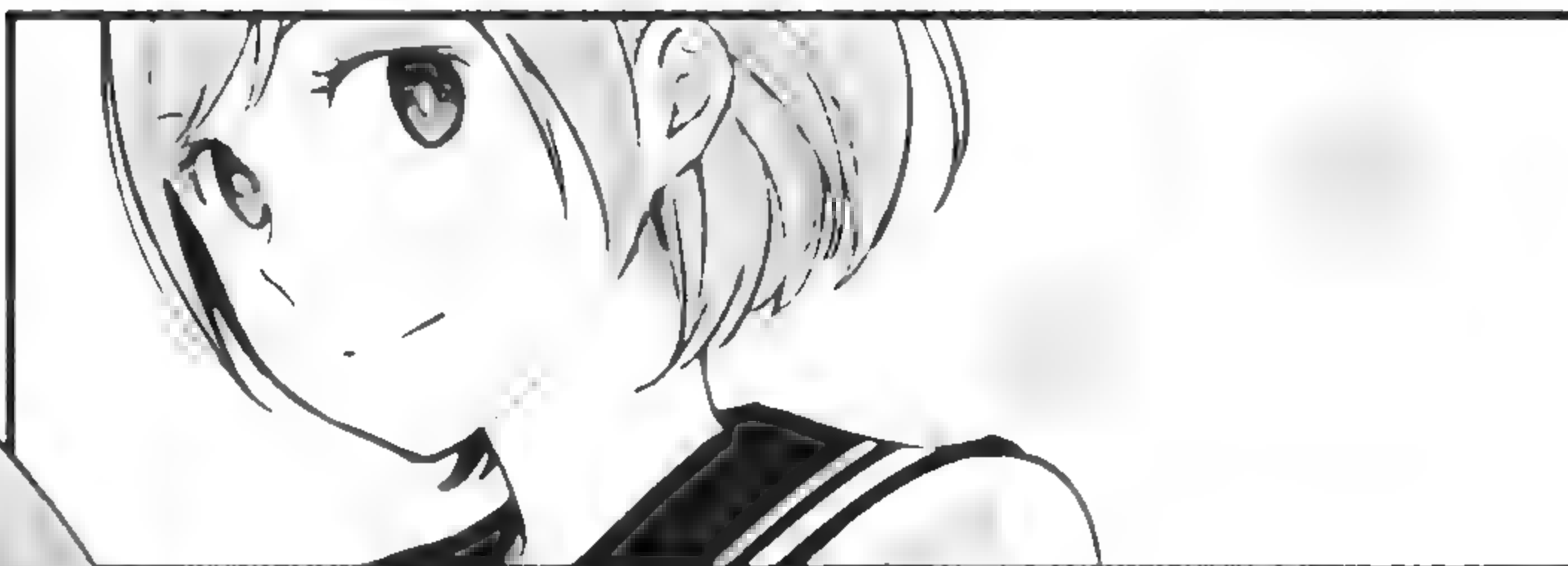
*A
Special
Case*



YEAH!

I
ACTUALLY
AM A YEAR
OLDER!

BUT,
WHOA,
YOU'RE A
SHARP
ONE!



A WHILE
BACK....

...THE
SCHOOL
FOUND OUT
THAT I'D DONE
SOMETHING
INAPPROPRIATE
WITH A
TEACHER...

SO I HAD
TO TAKE
A YEAR
OFF FROM
SCHOOL.

N-
NO!

I under-
stand!

AH...

I'VE
WEIRDED
YOU
OUT...

IT'S
NOT LIKE
THAT AT
ALL!

WHOA...

SO
THERE
REALLY
ARE
PEOPLE
LIKE
THAT.

...TOWARD
PEOPLE
WHO DON'T
FIT THOSE
MOLDS.

SOCIETY
HAS ITS
NORMS,
SO IT CAN
BE PRETTY
HARSH...

I MEAN,
IT'S FINE,
THOUGH.

I'M
ALREADY
USED TO
PEOPLE
LOOKING
AT ME
WEIRDLY.

SHE
THINKS A
LOT LIKE
KURO-
CHAN...

MAYBE
IT'S BECAUSE
OF THOSE
NORMS THAT
PEOPLE CAN LIVE
PEACEFUL AND
CAREFREE LIVES,
RIGHT...?

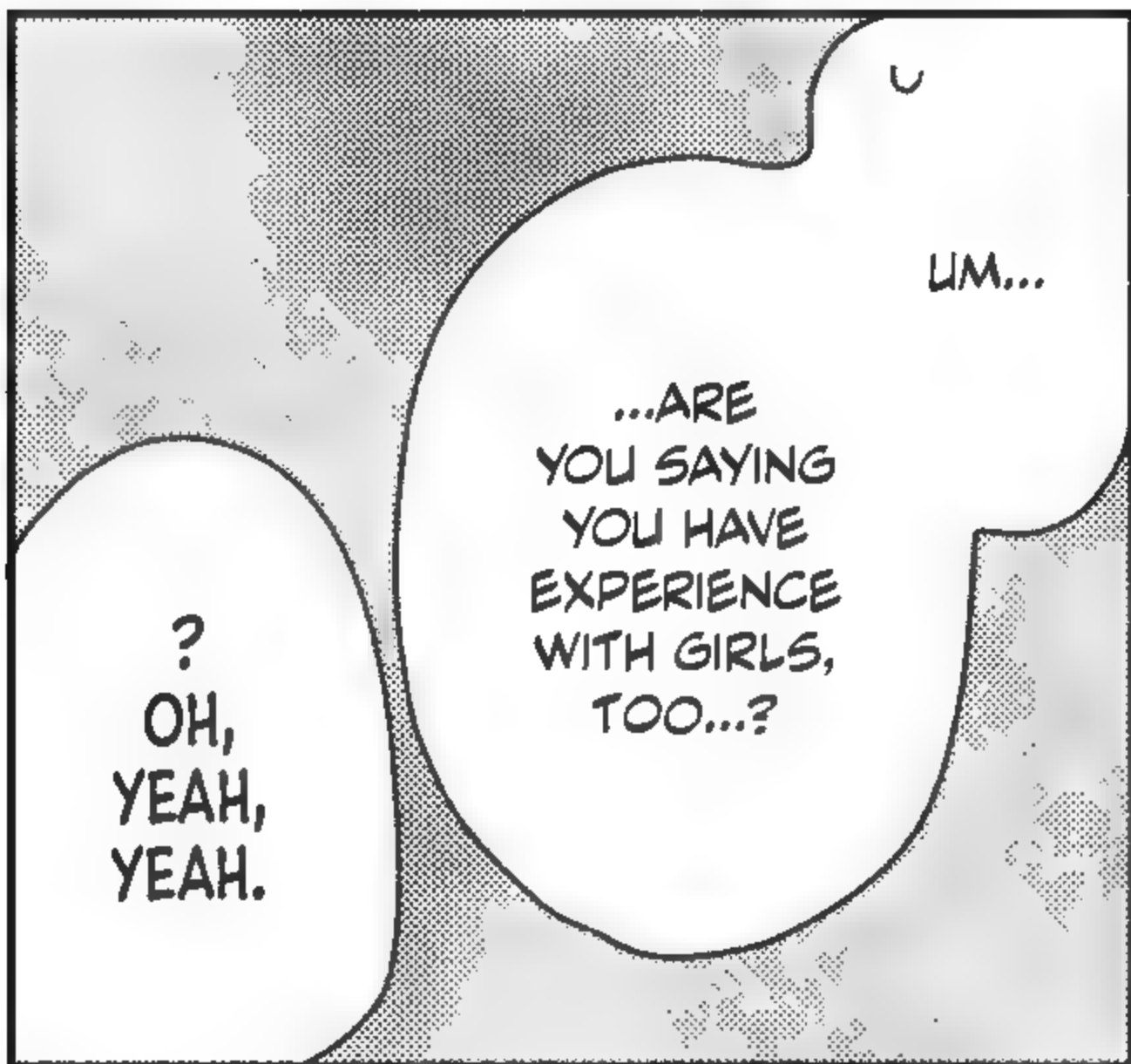
NOT THAT
IT FEELS
PARTICULARLY
GREAT,
THOUGH.

SEX IS
WAY MORE
CHILL WHEN
I'M WITH
A GUY.

HAH!
TRUE
THAT...

BUT, LIKE,
IS BEING
NORMAL
REALLY SUCH
A GOOD
THING?

IT'S
BORING,
ISN'T IT?



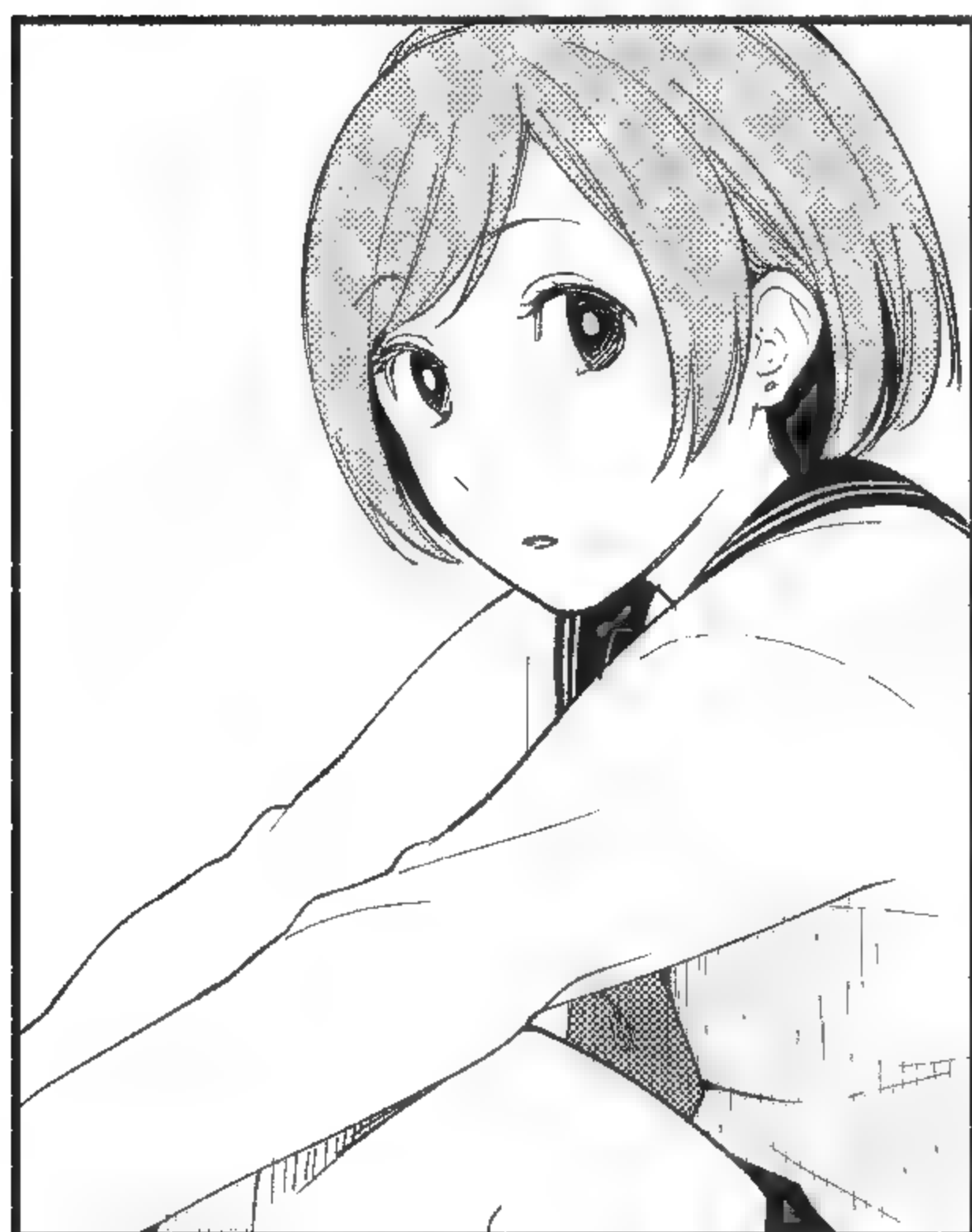


...

...WAS
WHEN IT
FELT THE
BEST.



TECHNICALLY,
THE LEAST
"NORMAL"
TIME... WHEN
I DID IT
WITH THAT
TEACHER...



...BUT,
THAT WAS
A LIE,
WASN'T IT?

YOU
SAID YOU
DON'T
HAVE ANY
EXPERIENCE
FALLING IN
LOVE...



AT THE
VERY LEAST,
I THINK YOU WERE
PROBABLY IN
LOVE WITH THAT
TEACHER!

AT...

...JUST
THE VIBE
I GET,
ANYWAY.



IT FEELS
LIKE SHE STILL
HAS A HOLD
ON MY HEART
SOMETIMES...

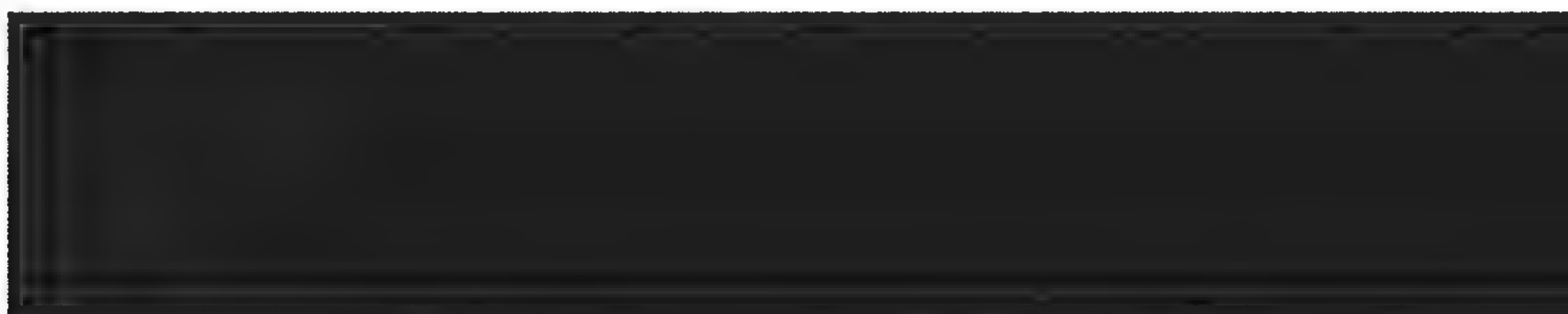
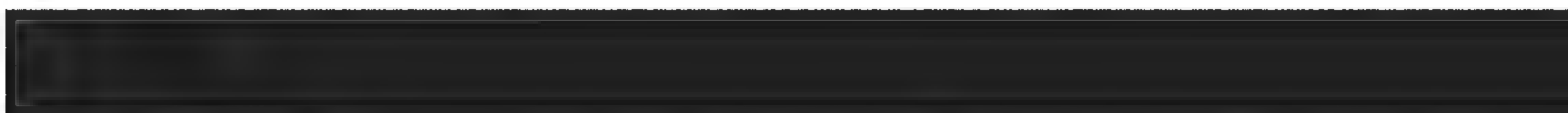
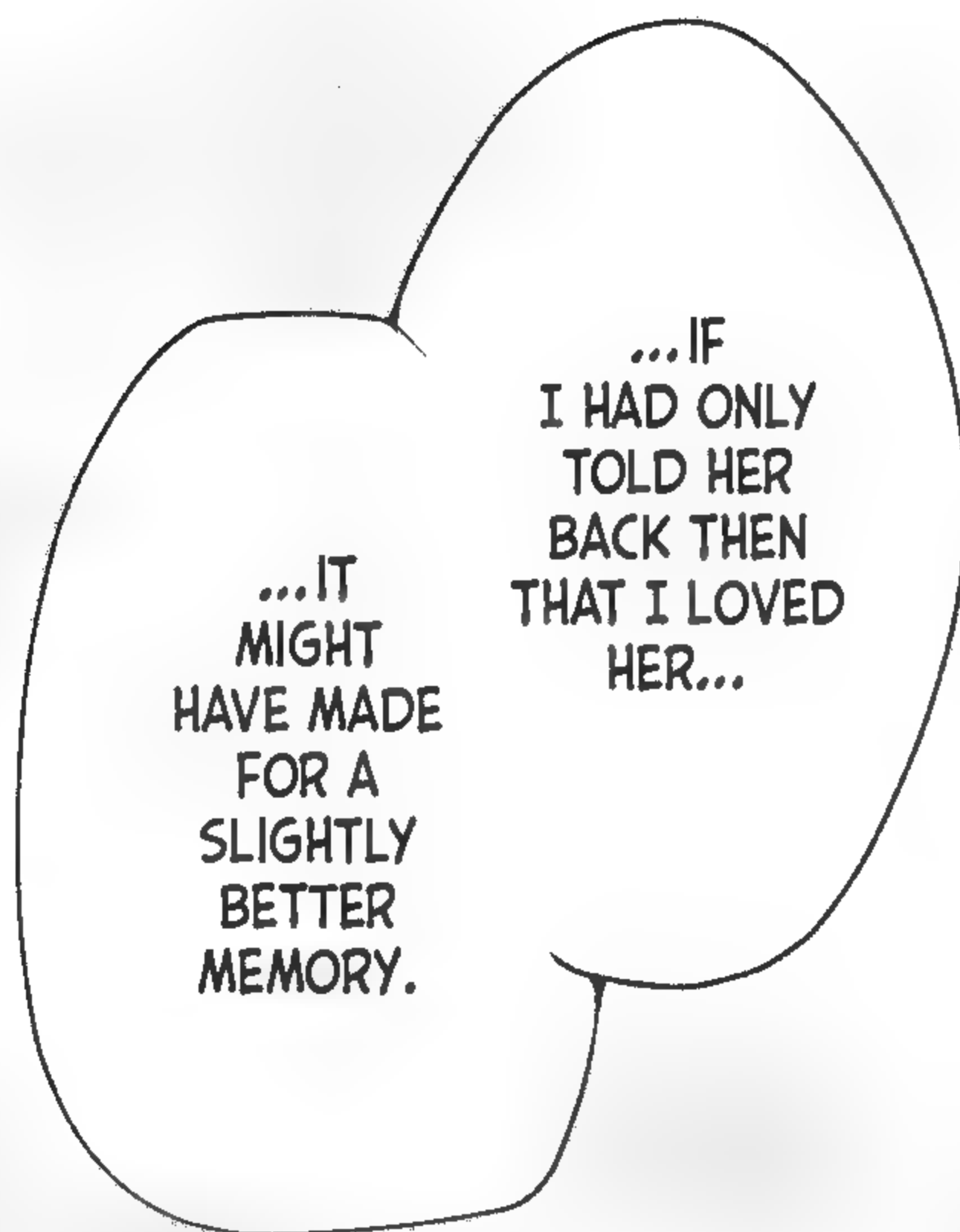
WHO KNOWS...



...IF THAT
REALLY WAS
LOVE...



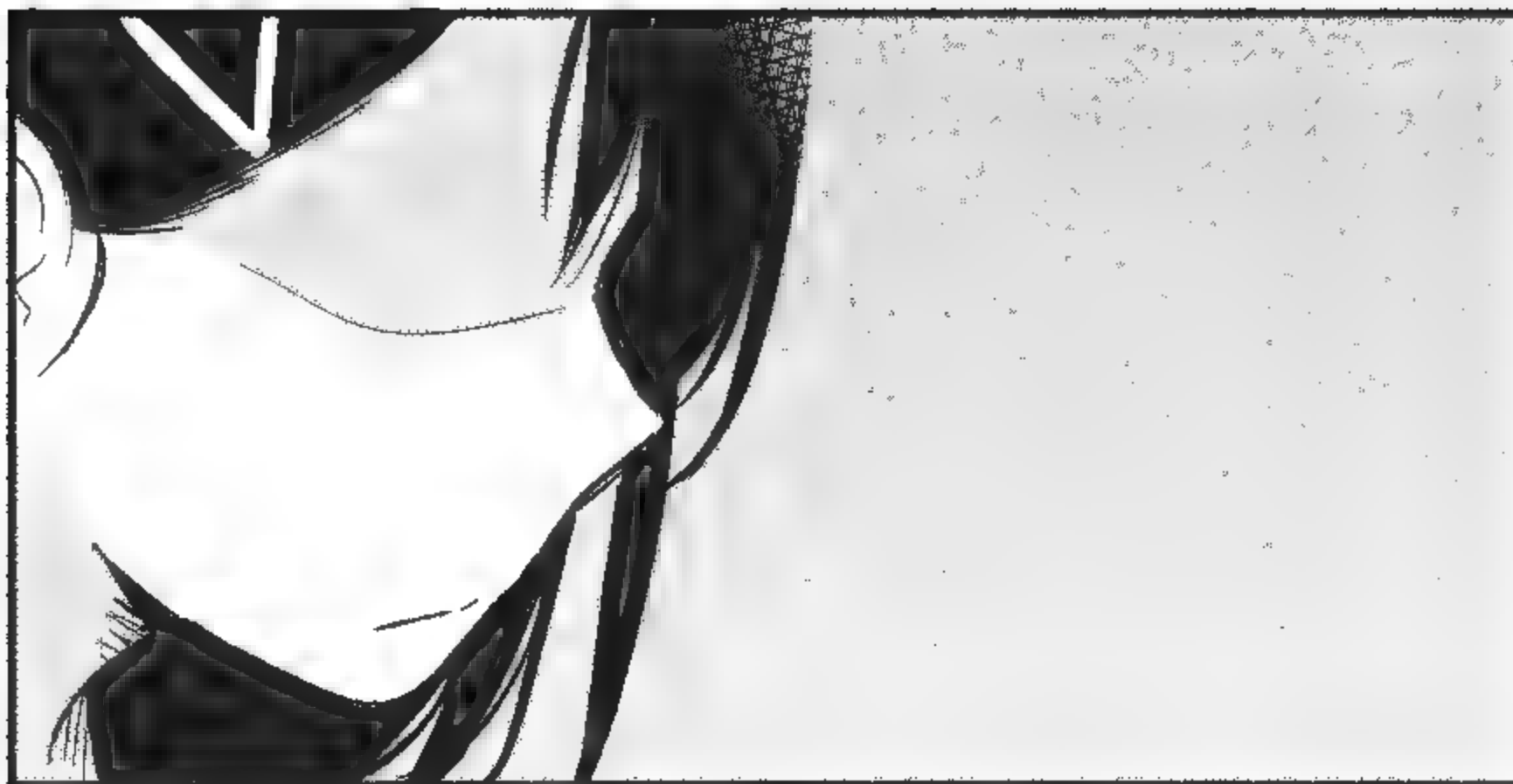
...BUT
I THOUGHT
THAT WAS JUST
BECAUSE SHE
WAS SOMEONE
I COULD NEVER
HAVE.



ガ
チャ
ン
KR-
CHK

FOR A LOVE
YOU KNOW
CAN NEVER BE
RECIPROCATED...





THAT
NATURALLY,
A DAY WOULD
COME, WHEN
YOUR FEELINGS
FADED.

...I
IMAGINED...
NORMALLY,
IT'D BE EASY
TO GIVE UP
ON.

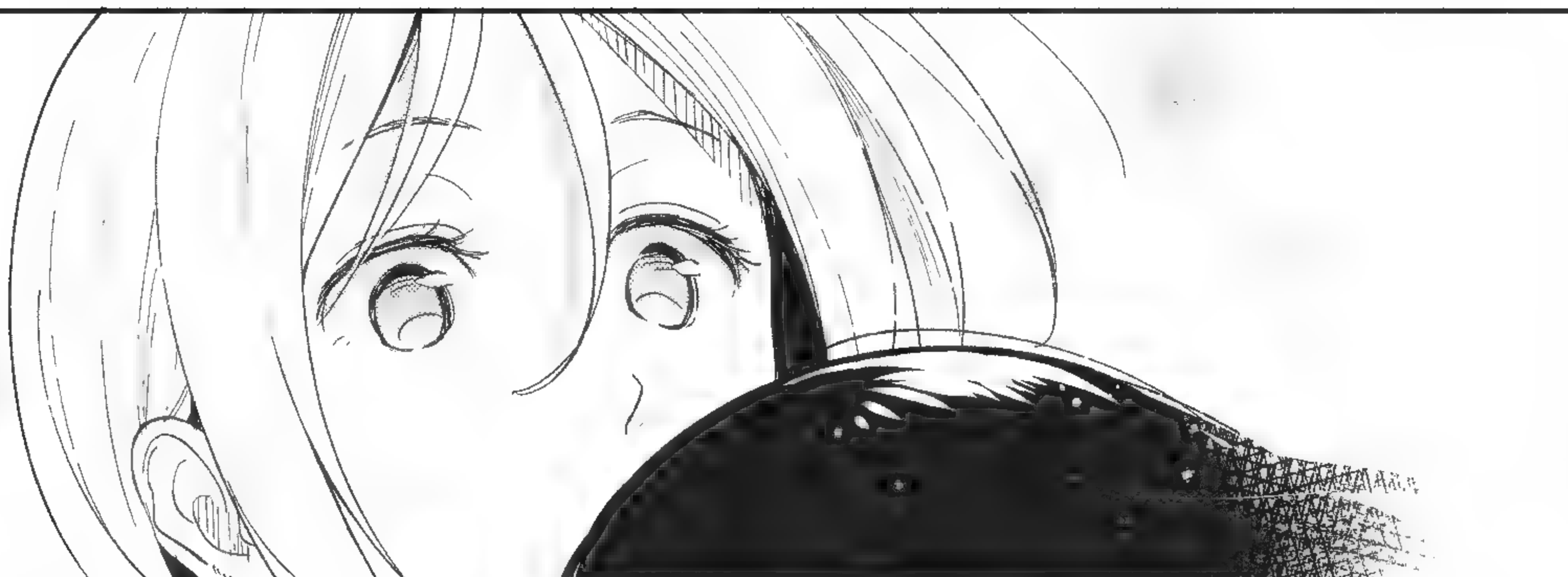


THAT'S
WHAT I
THOUGHT.



You're
still
embar-
rassed
by this?

Come
on...





BUT WHILE
WAITING
FOR THAT
DAY TO COME,
I BEGAN TO
UNDERSTAND...



UTA-
CHAN...?



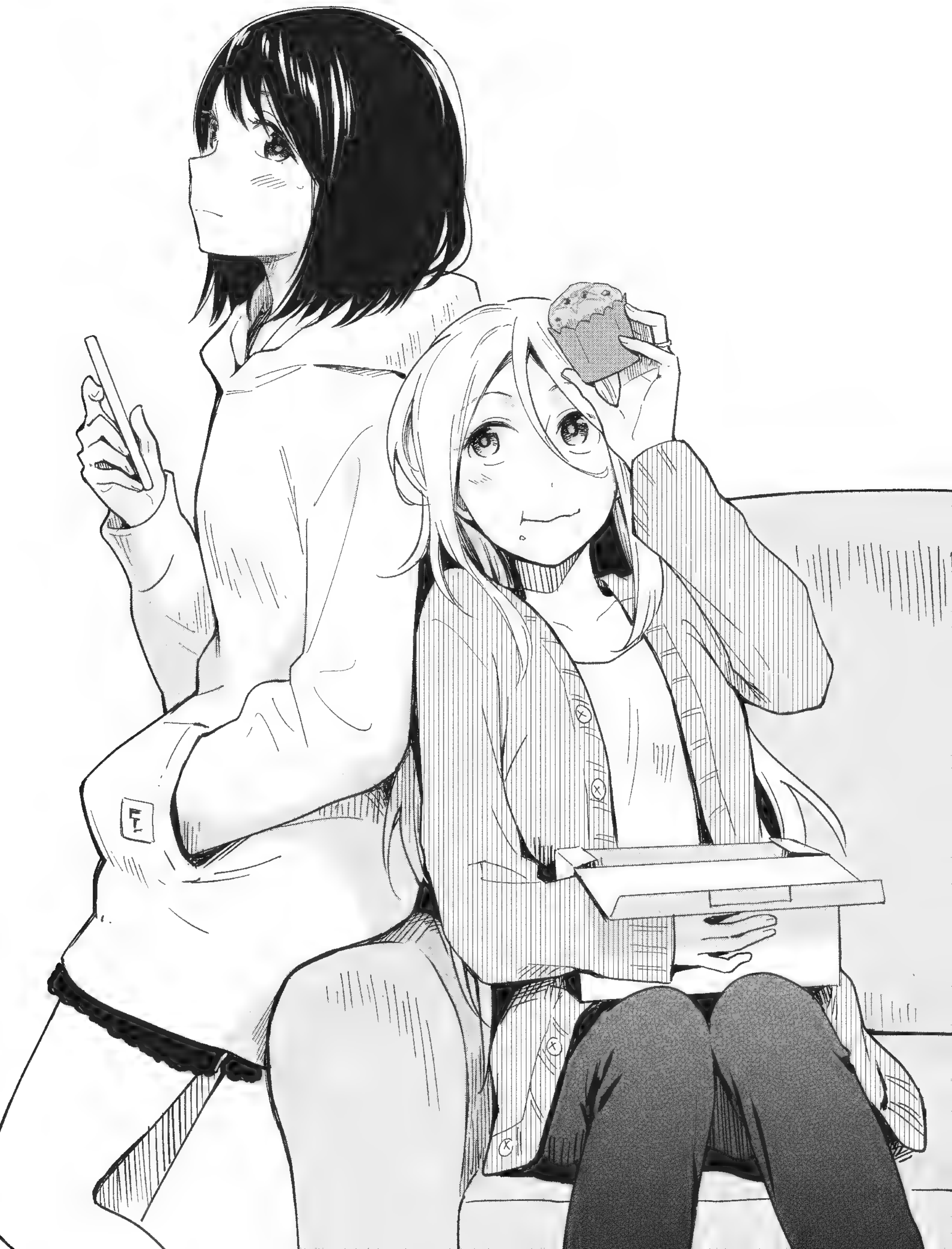
WHAT'S
NORMAL...

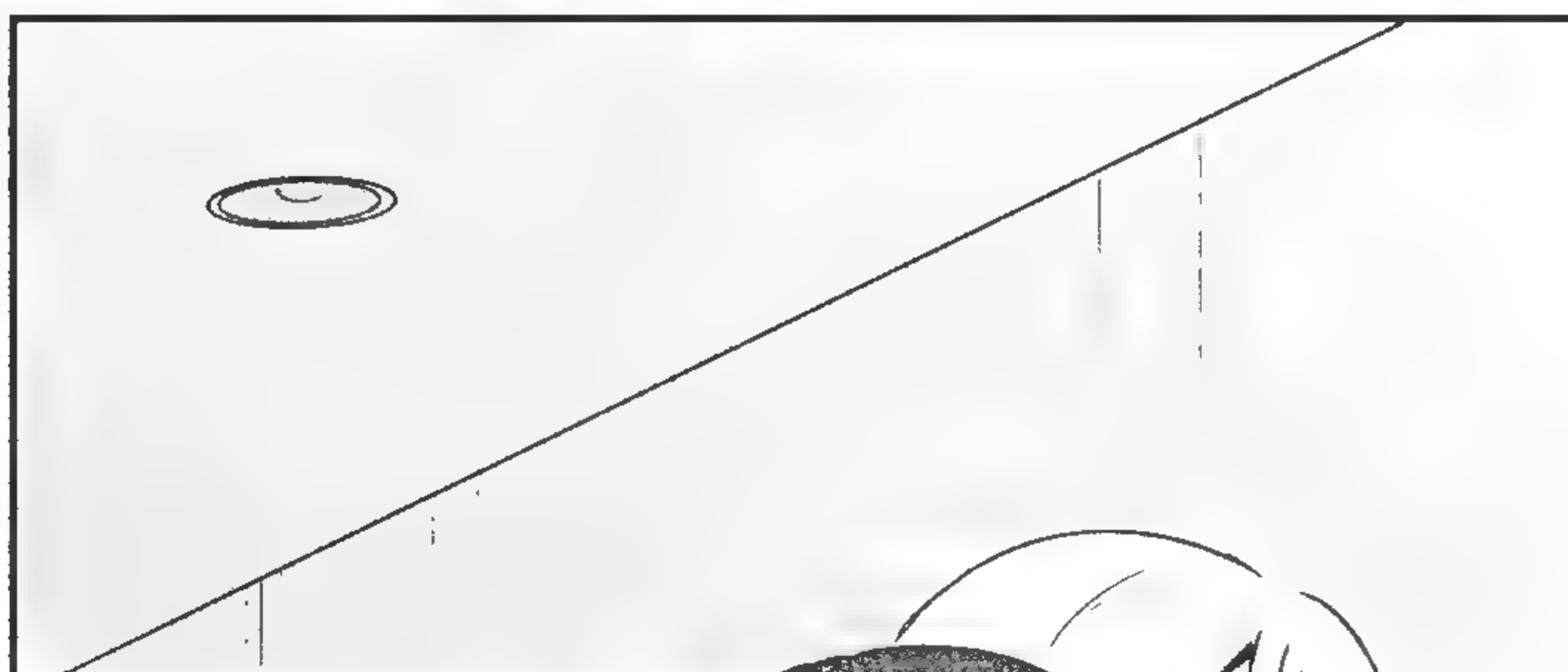
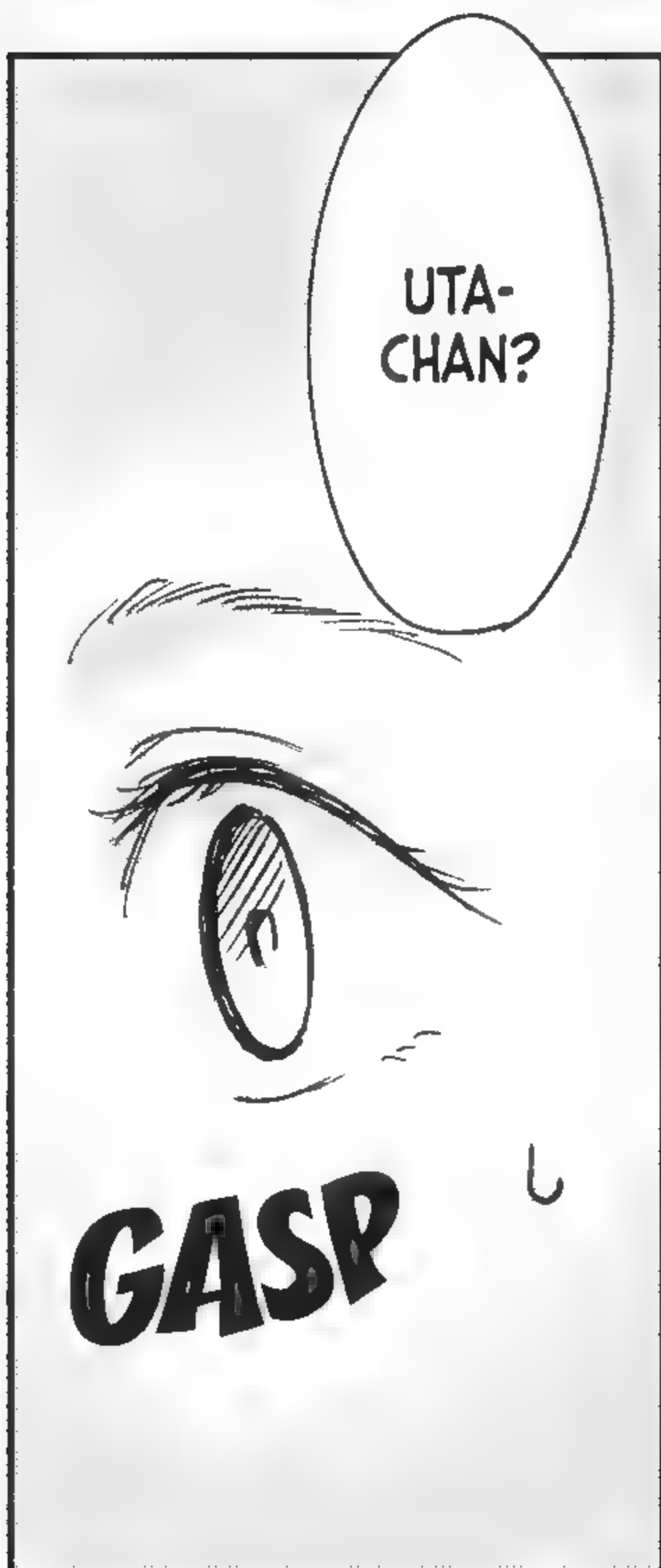
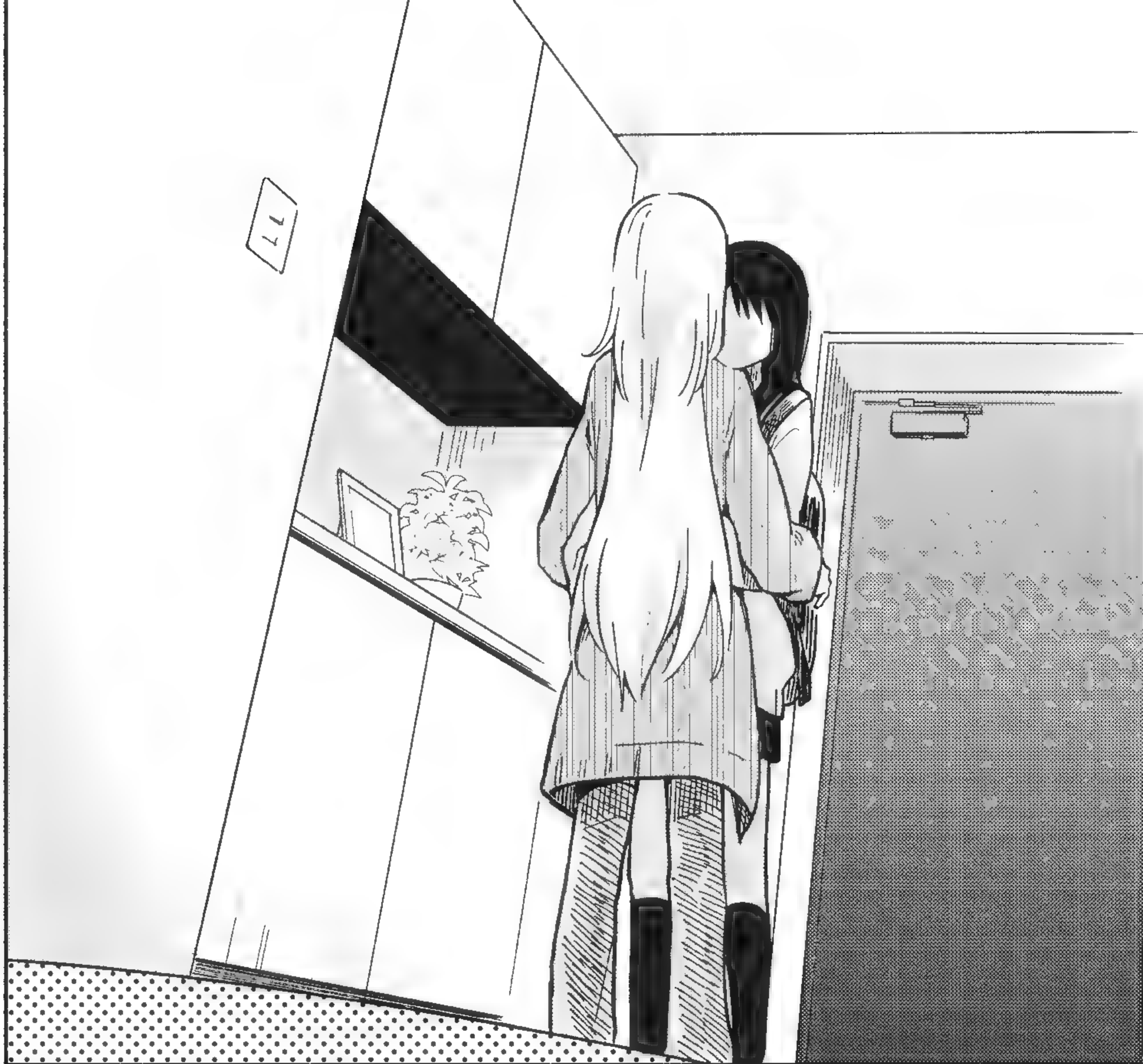
...MIGHT NOT
APPLY TO ME.

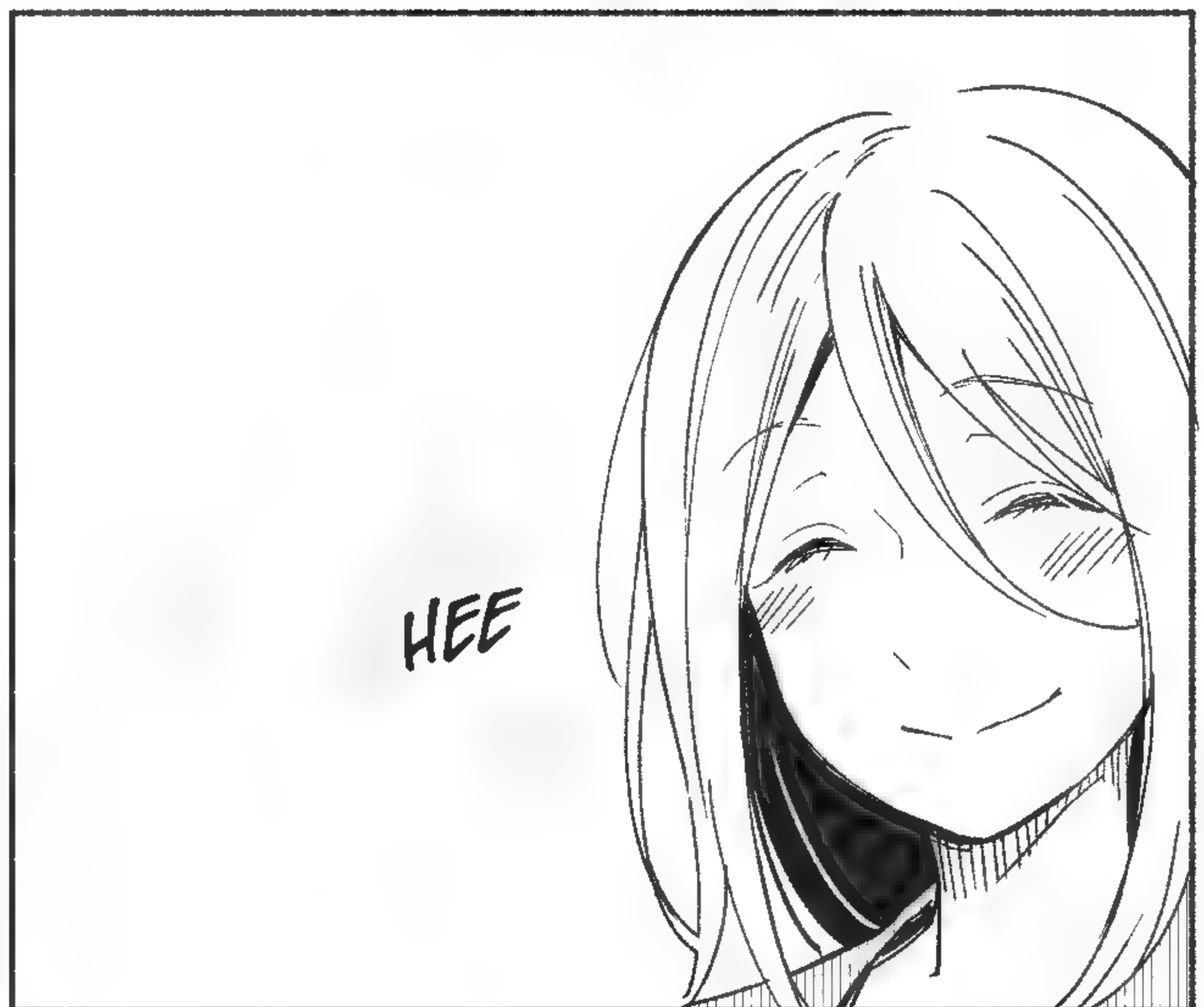
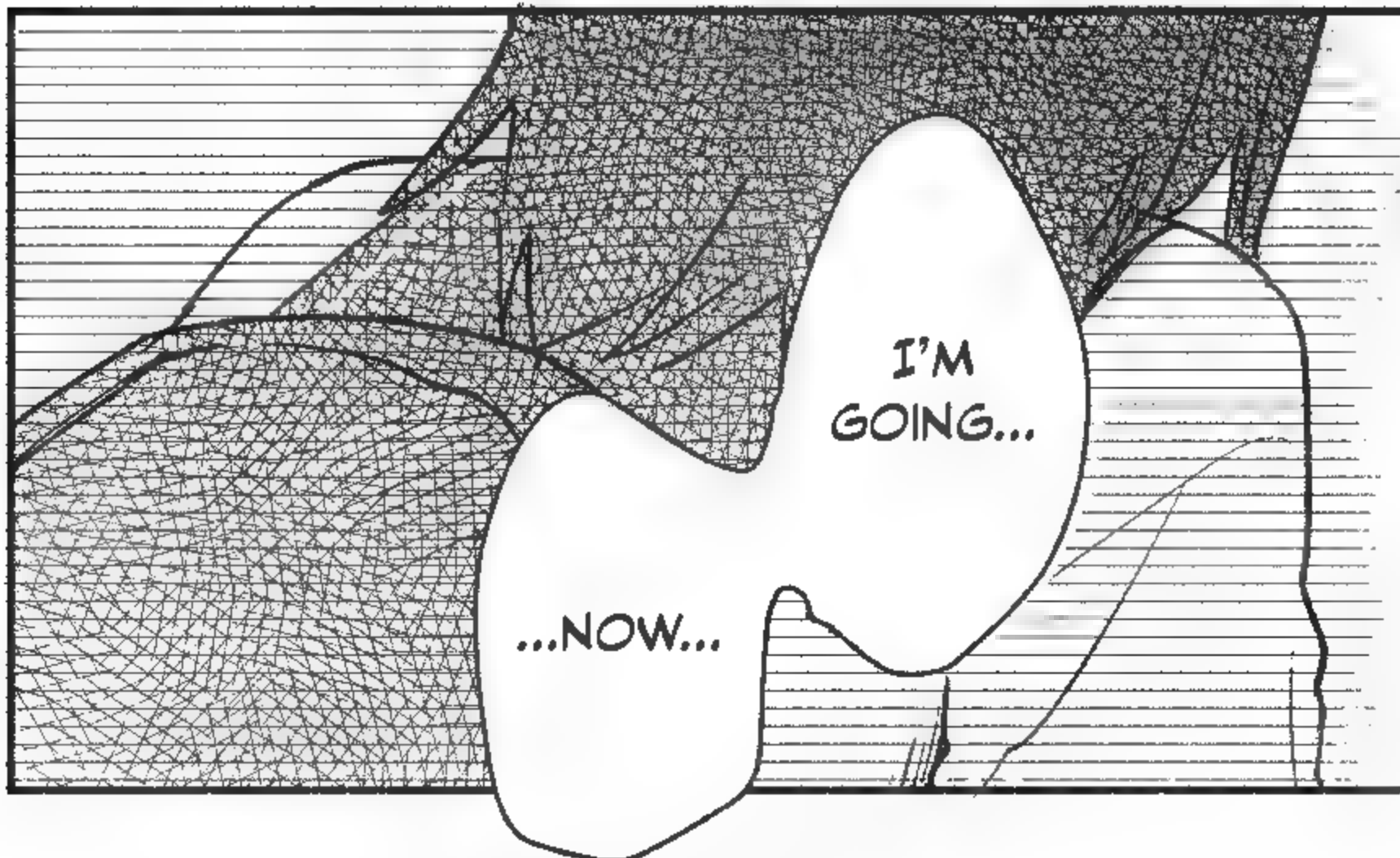
*If I Could
Reach You*

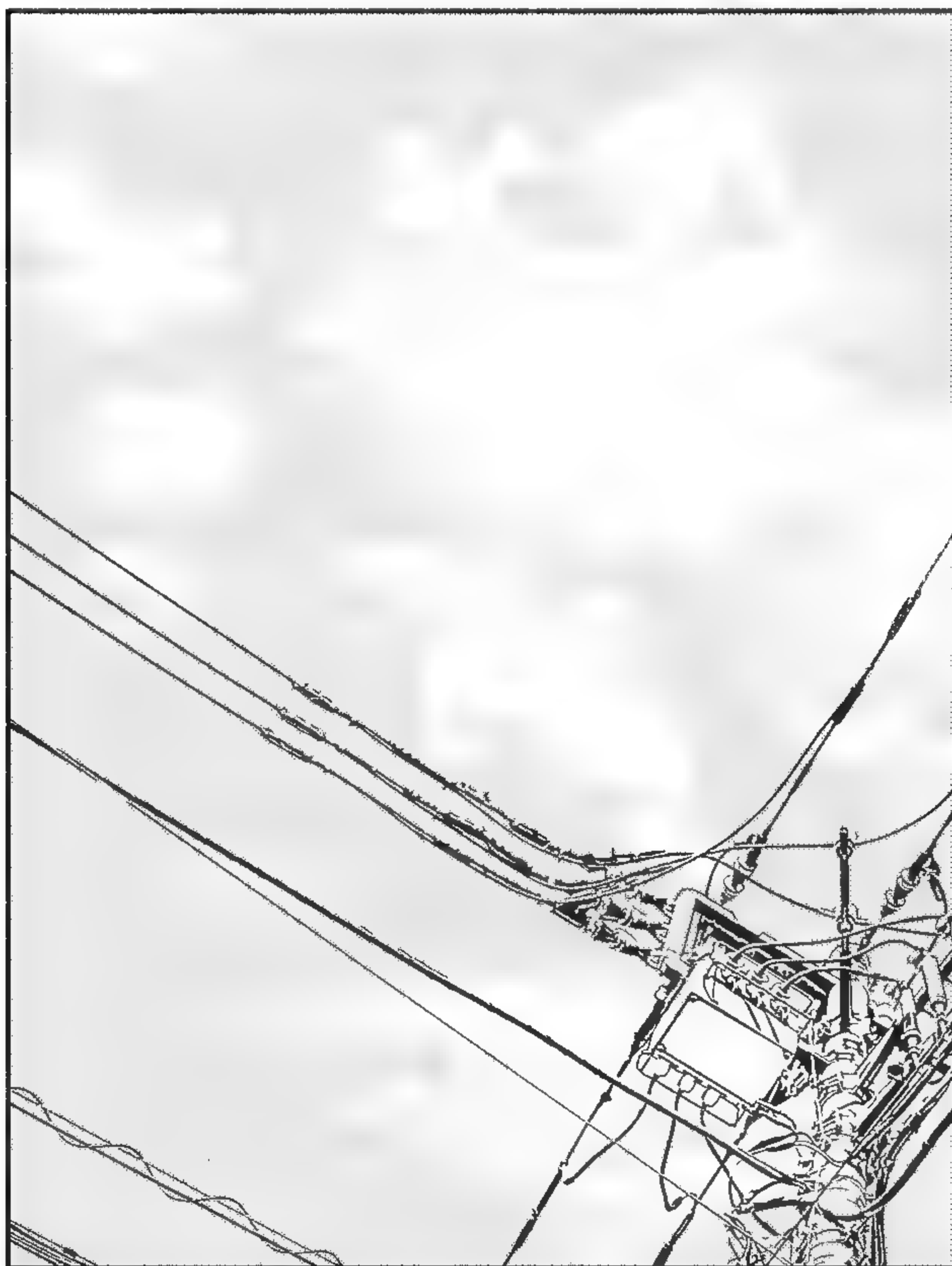
*If I Could
Reach You*

Chapter 4











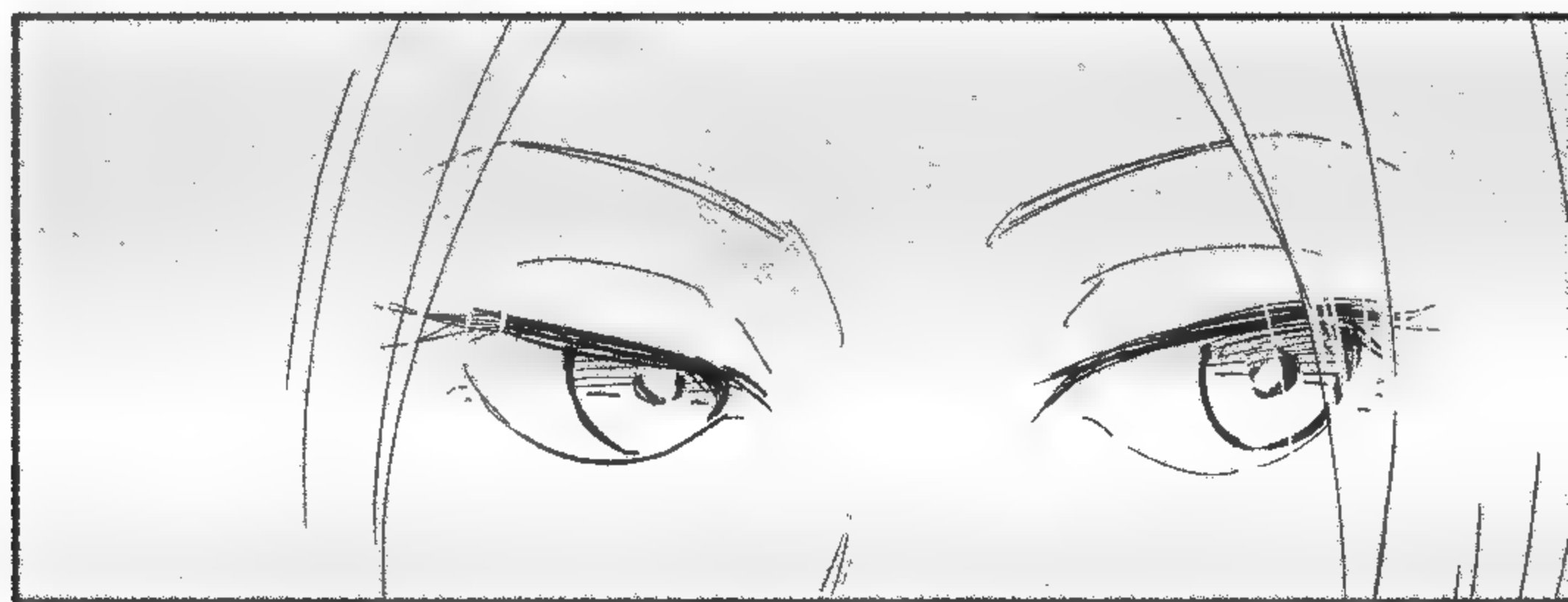
WELL...

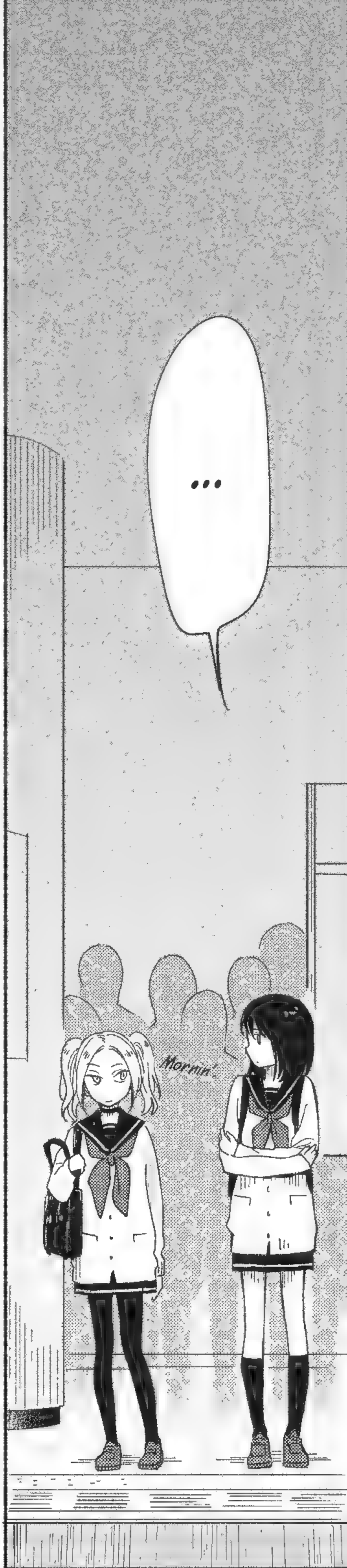
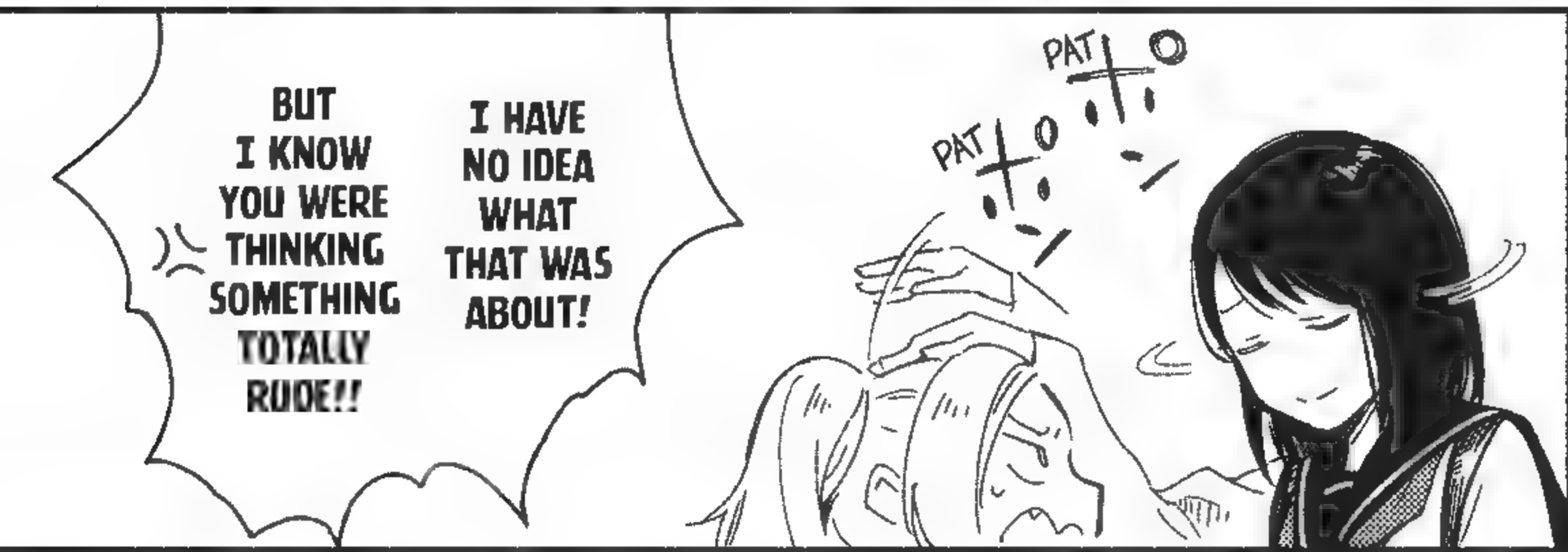
BECAUSE...

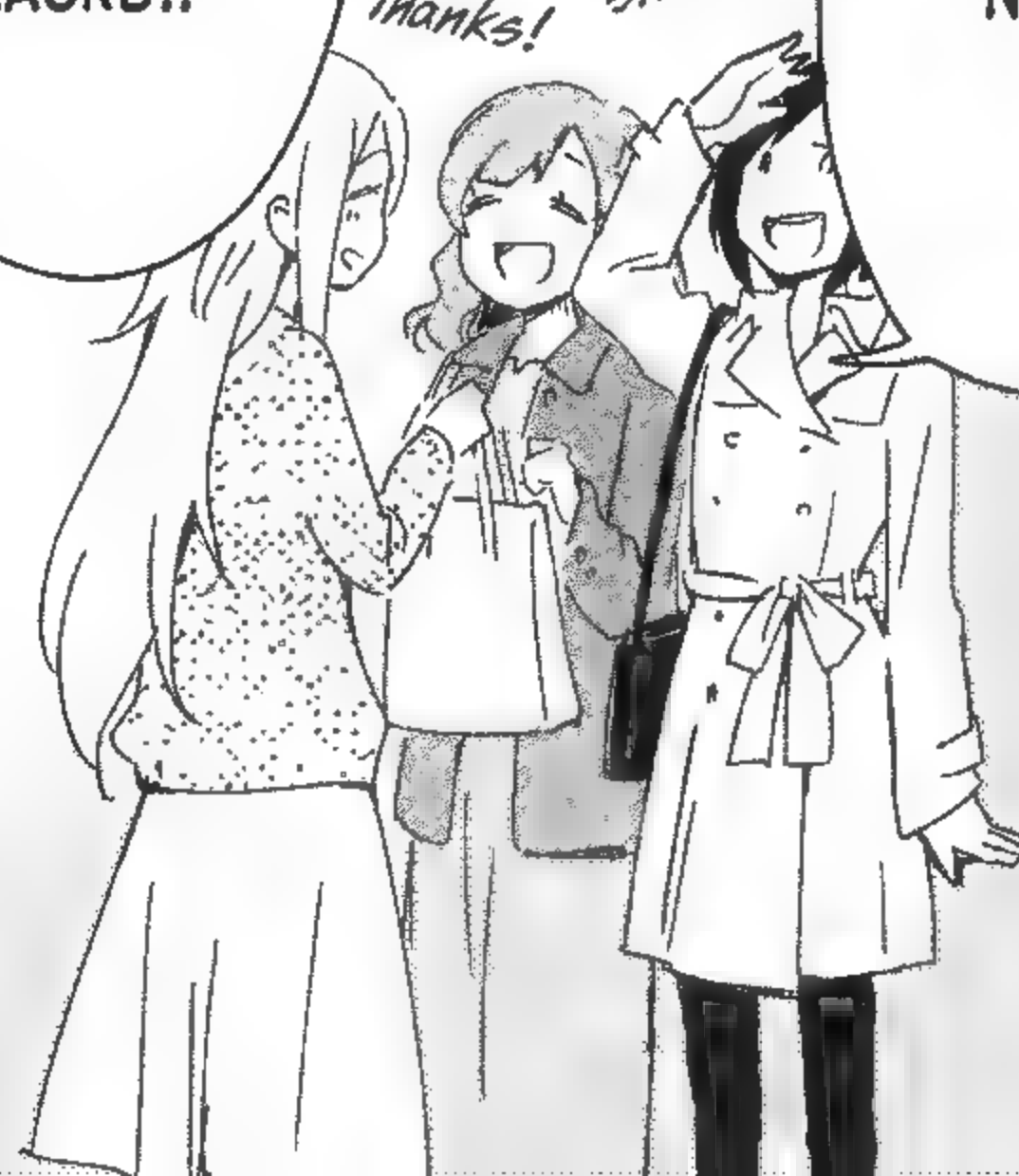
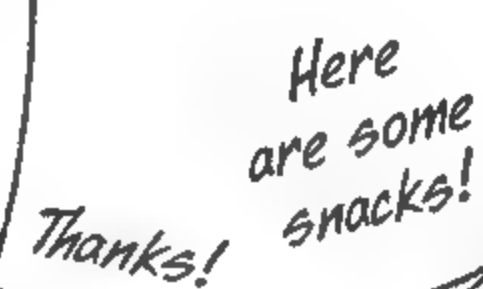
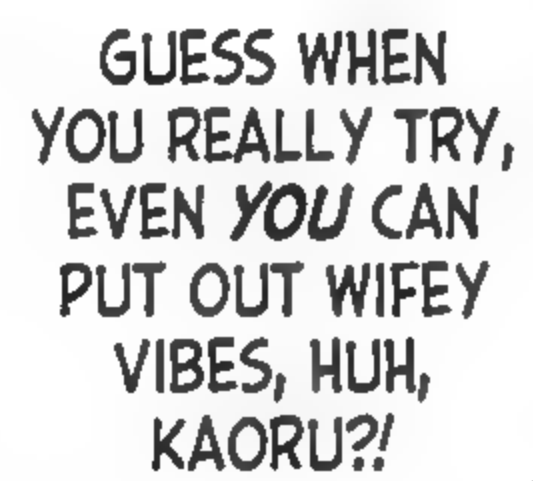
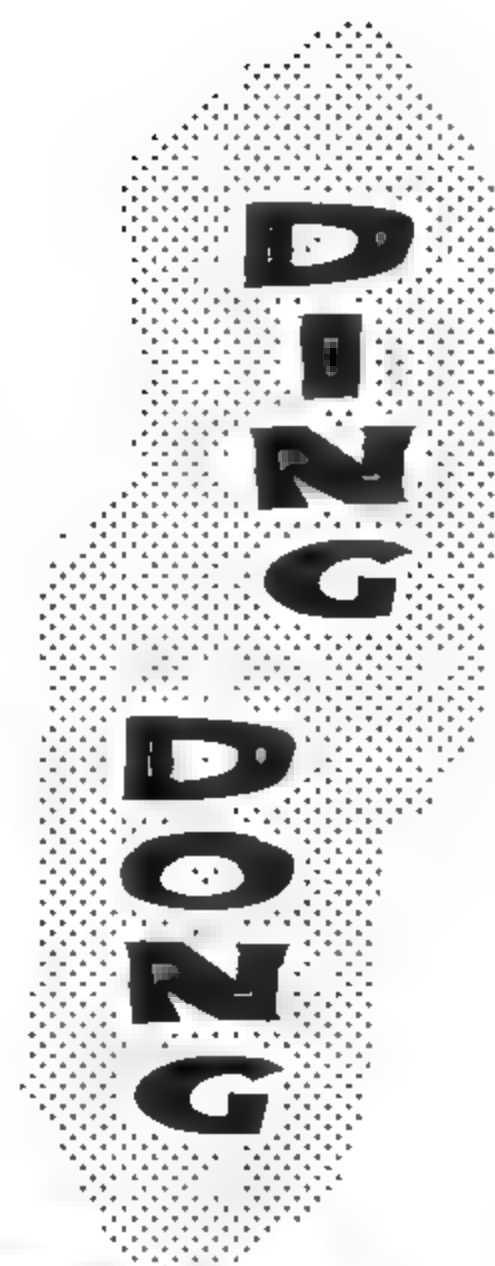
*...MY BODY KEEPS
ACTING ON ITS OWN...
IT REALLY DOES...*

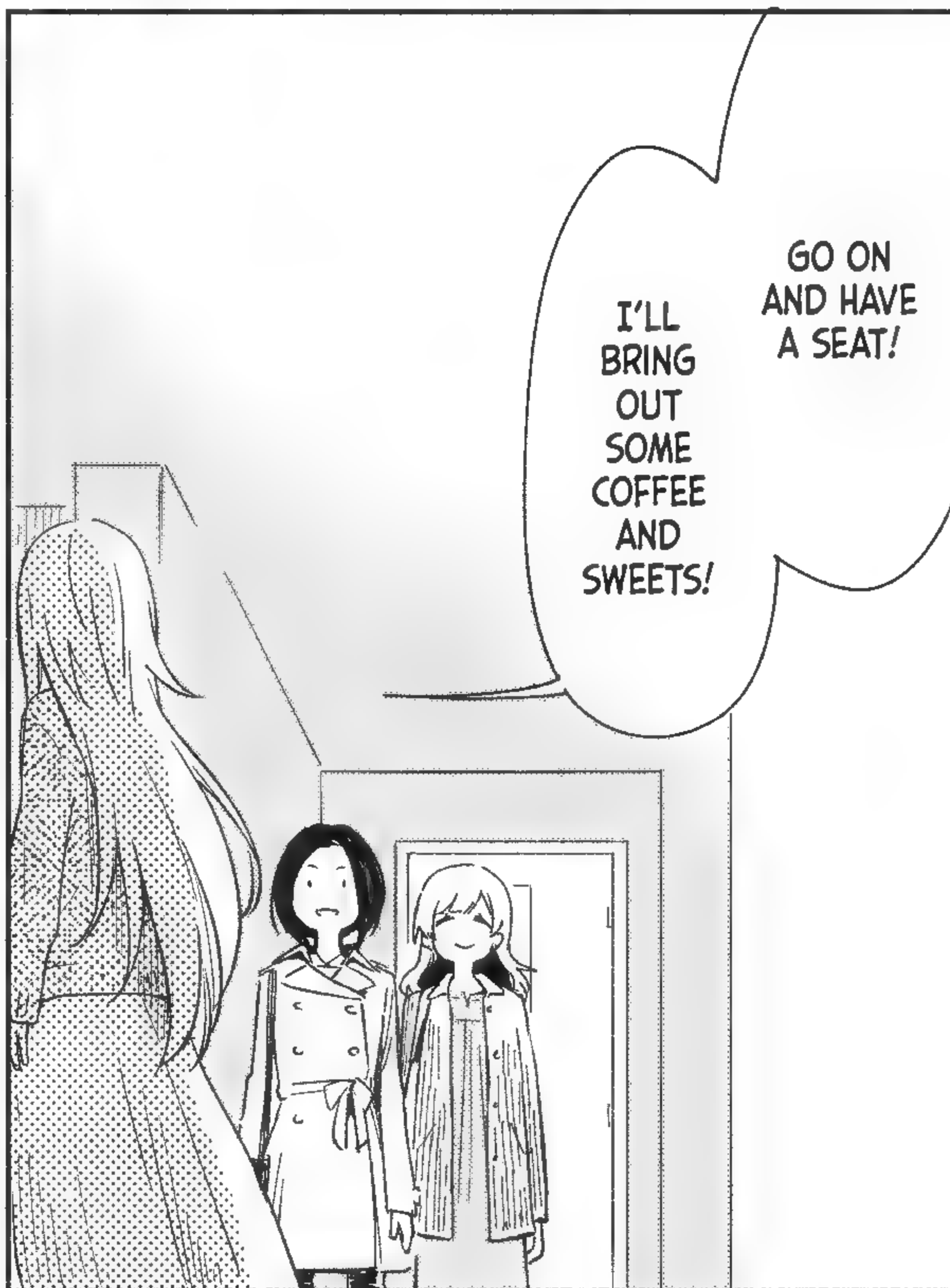
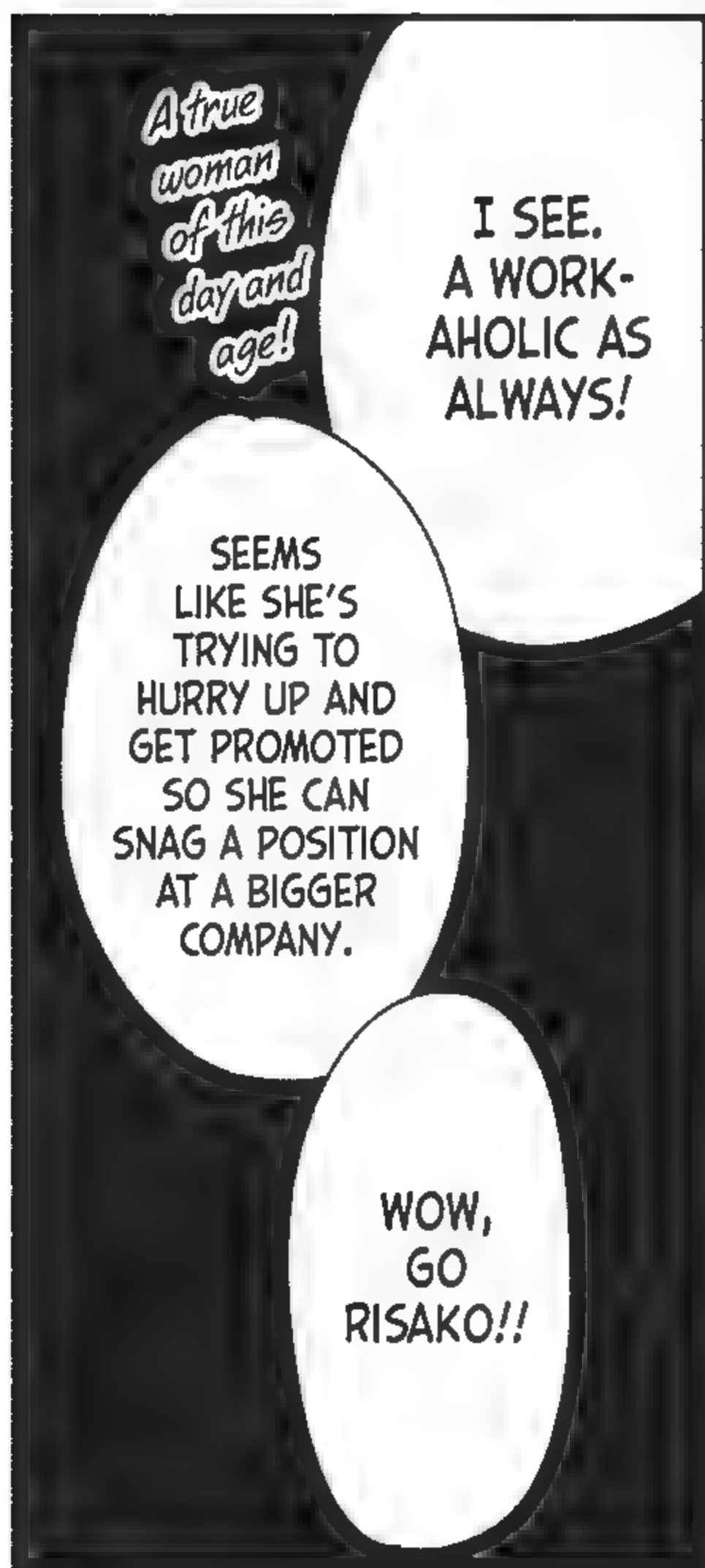


LITTLE
WEIRD
TO JUST
STAND THERE
HUGGING
YOURSELF.











BA-
HA-
HA

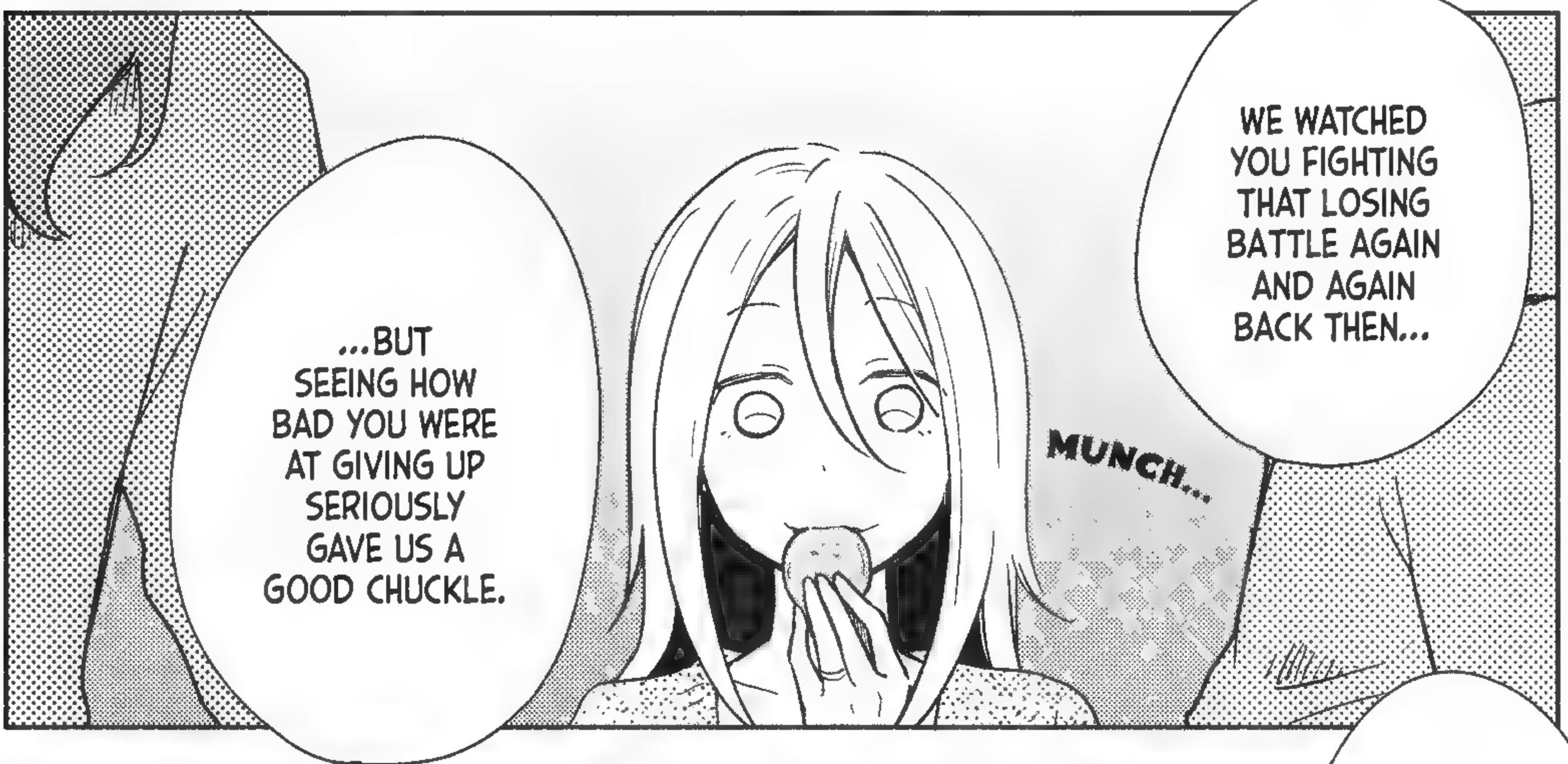
I KNOW!
AND TO THINK
IT'D BE TO
THAT OLD
FRIEND OF
YOURS WHO
BRUSHED
YOU OFF A
MILLION
TIMES.

MAN,
I GUESS
MIRACLES
REALLY DO
HAPPEN!



SERIOUSLY,
THOUGH...

...I DIDN'T
EXPECT THAT,
OF ALL OF US,
YOU'D BE THE
NEXT ONE TO
TIE THE KNOT
AFTER ME,
KAORU!



...BUT
SEEING HOW
BAD YOU WERE
AT GIVING UP
SERIOUSLY
GAVE US A
GOOD CHUCKLE.

MUNCH...

WE WATCHED
YOU FIGHTING
THAT LOSING
BATTLE AGAIN
AND AGAIN
BACK THEN...

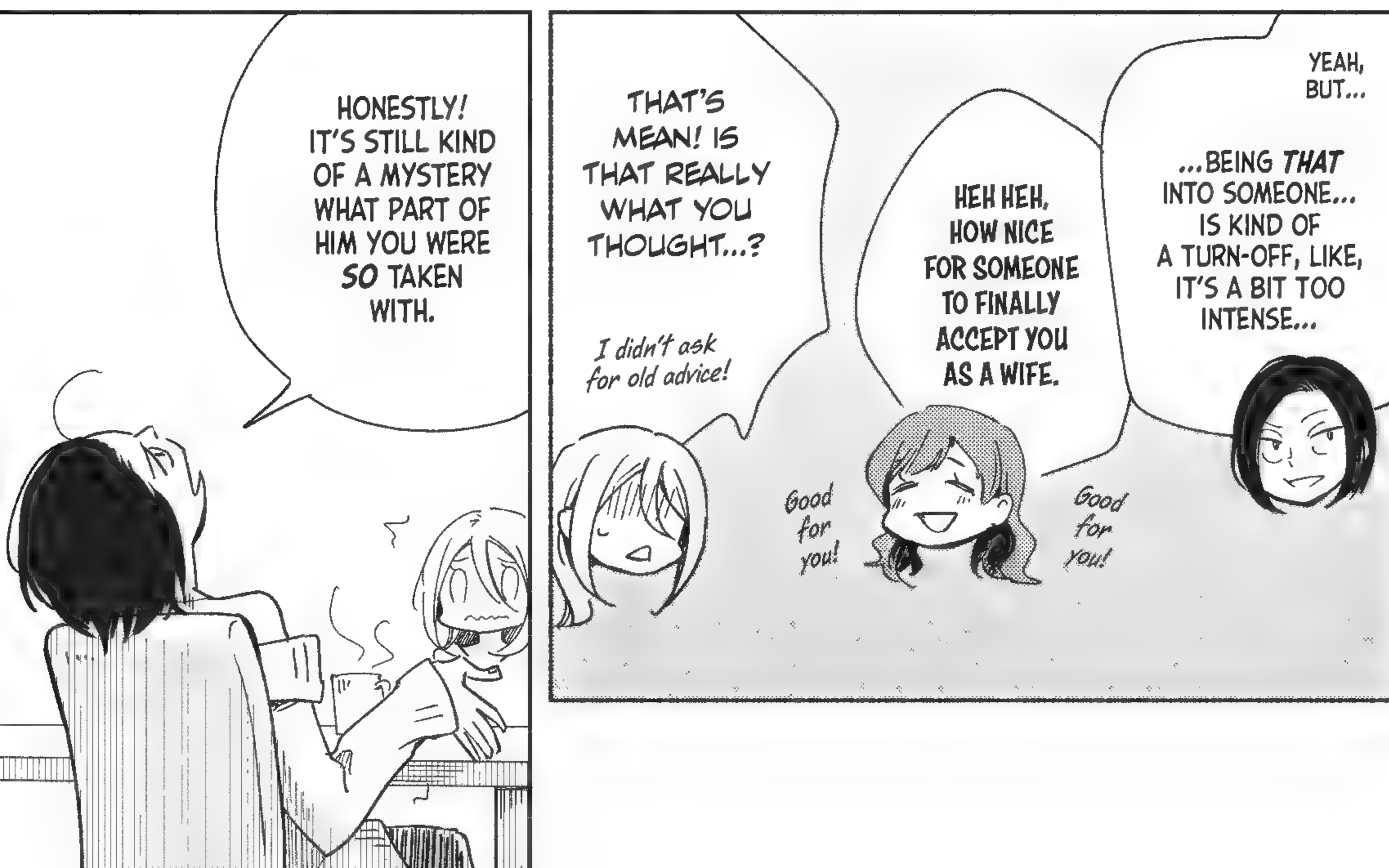
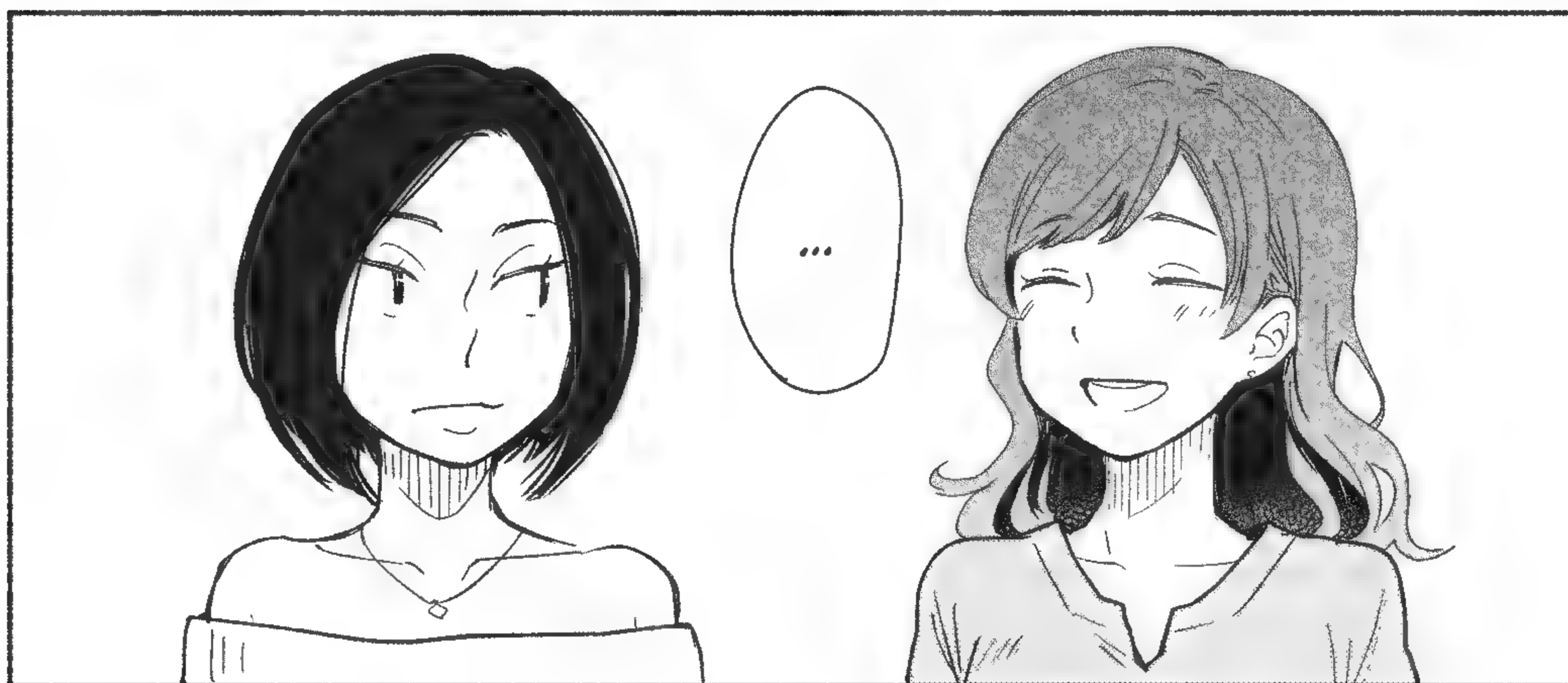


A-
HA-
HA

OH
YEAAAAH!

...WAS
AN UNOFFICIAL
HOLIDAY TO TRY
AND CHEER YOU
UP AFTER BEING
REJECTED?!

REMEMBER
HOW FOR ALL
SEVEN YEARS OF
HIGH SCHOOL AND
COLLEGE, EVERY
VALENTINE'S
DAY...





UH... WELL
I MEAN, THAT'S
TRUE, BUT...

*Wait, I thought he
was a little more
handsome
than that...*



*And he always
looks like he's
half asleep.*

HE'S
TALL, AND
WELL, I GUESS
HE'S KINDA
GOOD-LOOKING,
BUT ON THE
WHOLE HE'S
PRETTY NORMAL.
A LITTLE PLAIN.



UH. HANG
ON, DON'T
PUT ME ON
THE SPOT!

*Your
answer
please, in
the next five
seconds.*

HMM?
SUCH
AS?

I-I KNOW
THAT HE MIGHT
NOT HAVE
ANYTHING EX-
CEPTIONALLY
APPEALING
ABOUT HIM,
BUT REIICHI-
KUN DOES
HAVE A LOT OF
WONDERFUL
QUALITIES
...!



CHOP

C'MON,
DON'T
BULLY
HER.

Er!

W-
WATT!

Um!

BWAH!

*This
isn't
grade
school.*



SORRY, BUT
JUST GOING
BY EVERYTHING
YOU'VE TOLD US,
I HAVEN'T
UNDERSTOOD
HIS CHARM, NOT
EVEN ONCE...

*Now, Yocchan's
husband, he's rich,
and refined. He's
pretty amazing...*

Utter
Shock

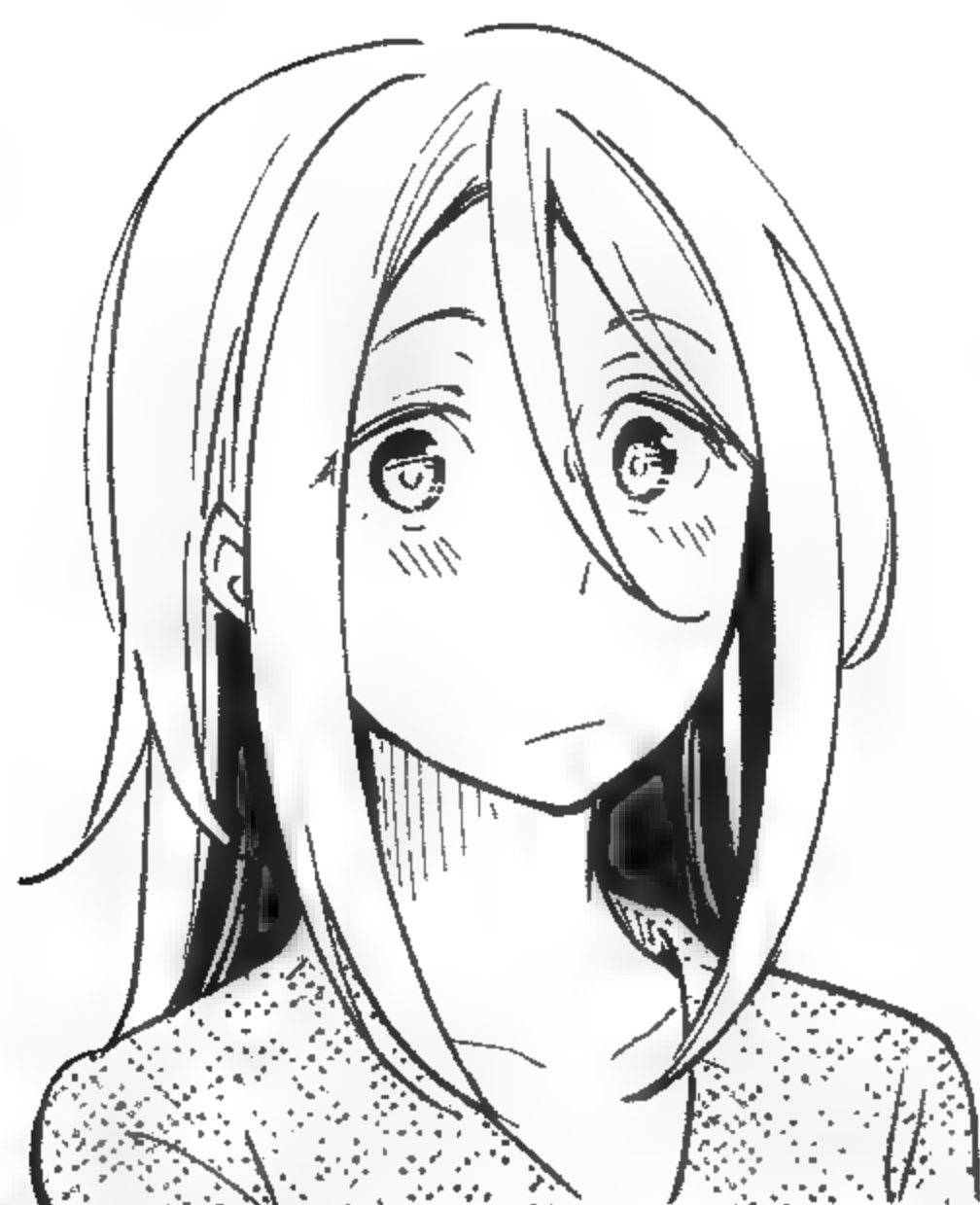
MEOWING



OR, LIKE,
AN ALLURE
THAT OTHER
PEOPLE
WOULDN'T
BE ABLE
TO UNDER-
STAND.

THE ONE
YOU MARRY
ALWAYS HAS
A KIND OF...
GOODNESS
THAT YOU CAN'T
QUITE EXPRESS
IN WORDS.

I THINK
I SORT OF
GET IT.



I
THINK
HE'S A
GOOD
MATCH
FOR YOU,
KAORU.

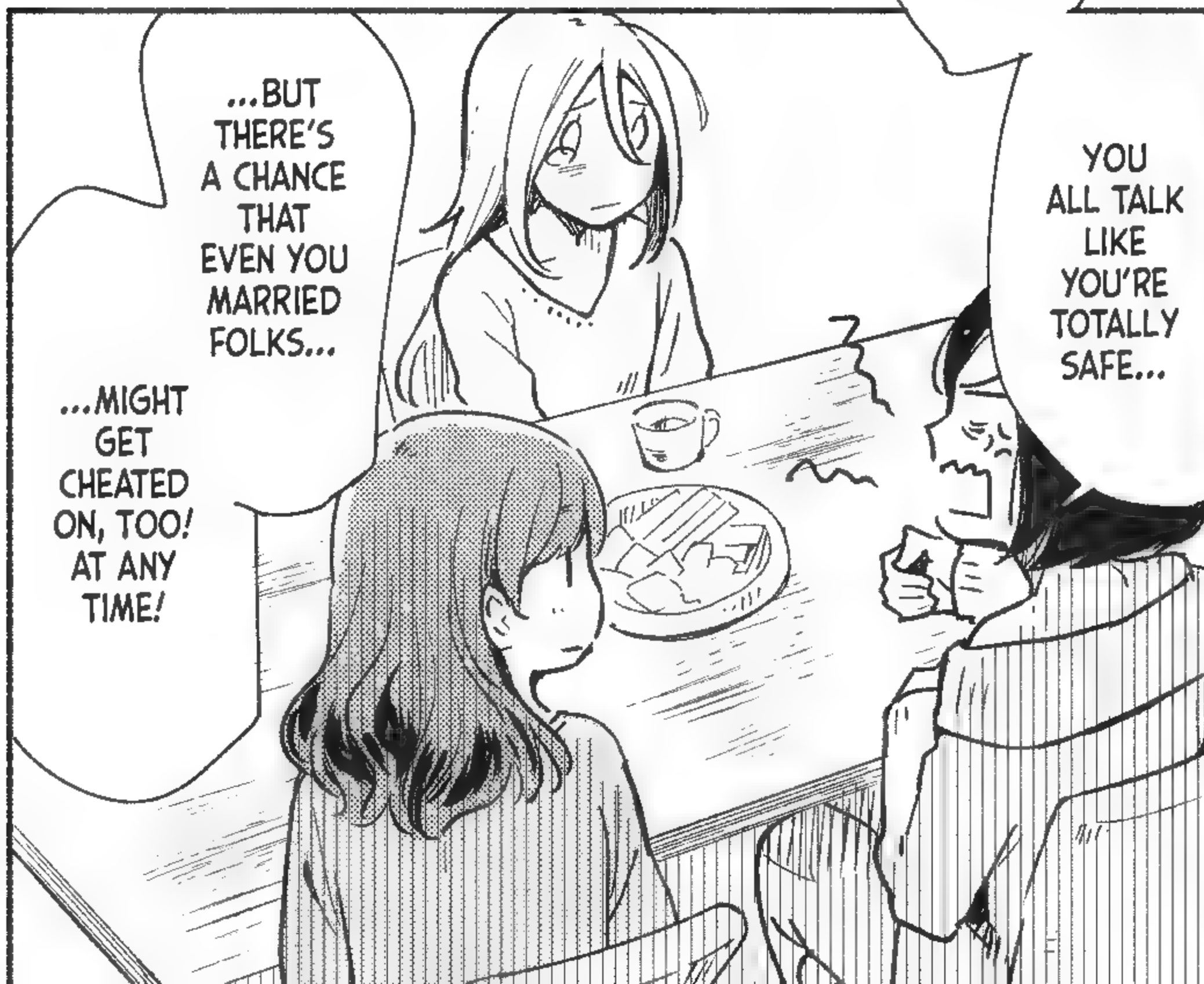
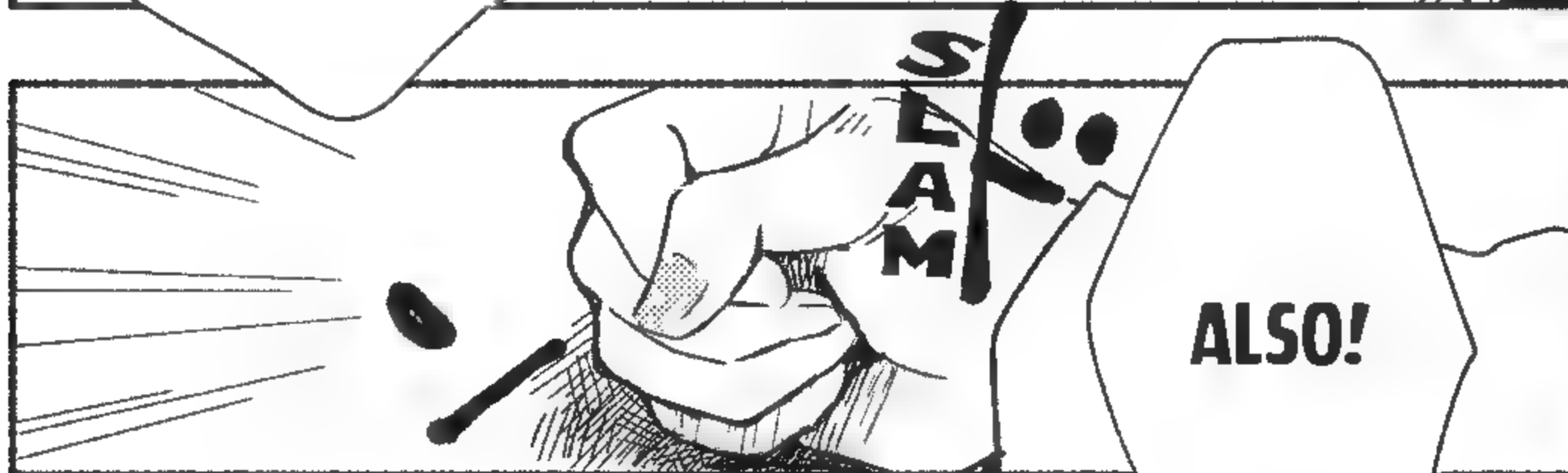
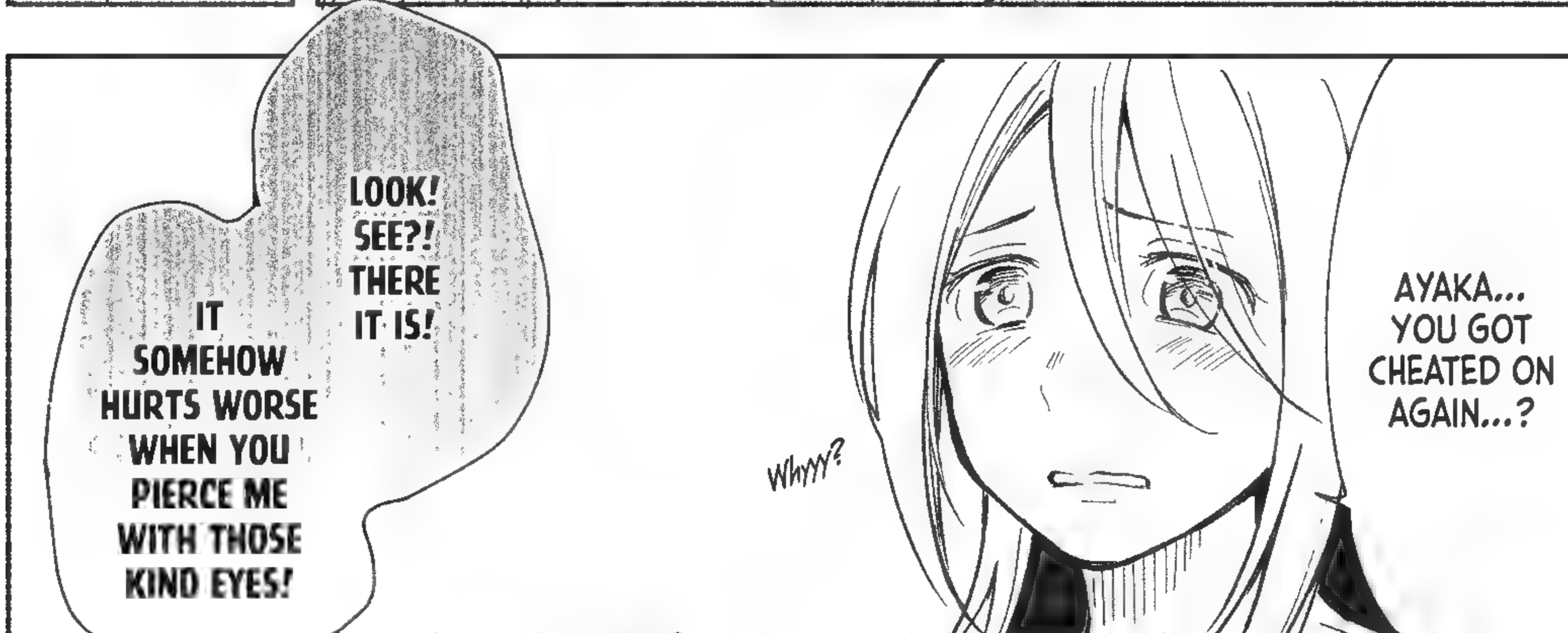
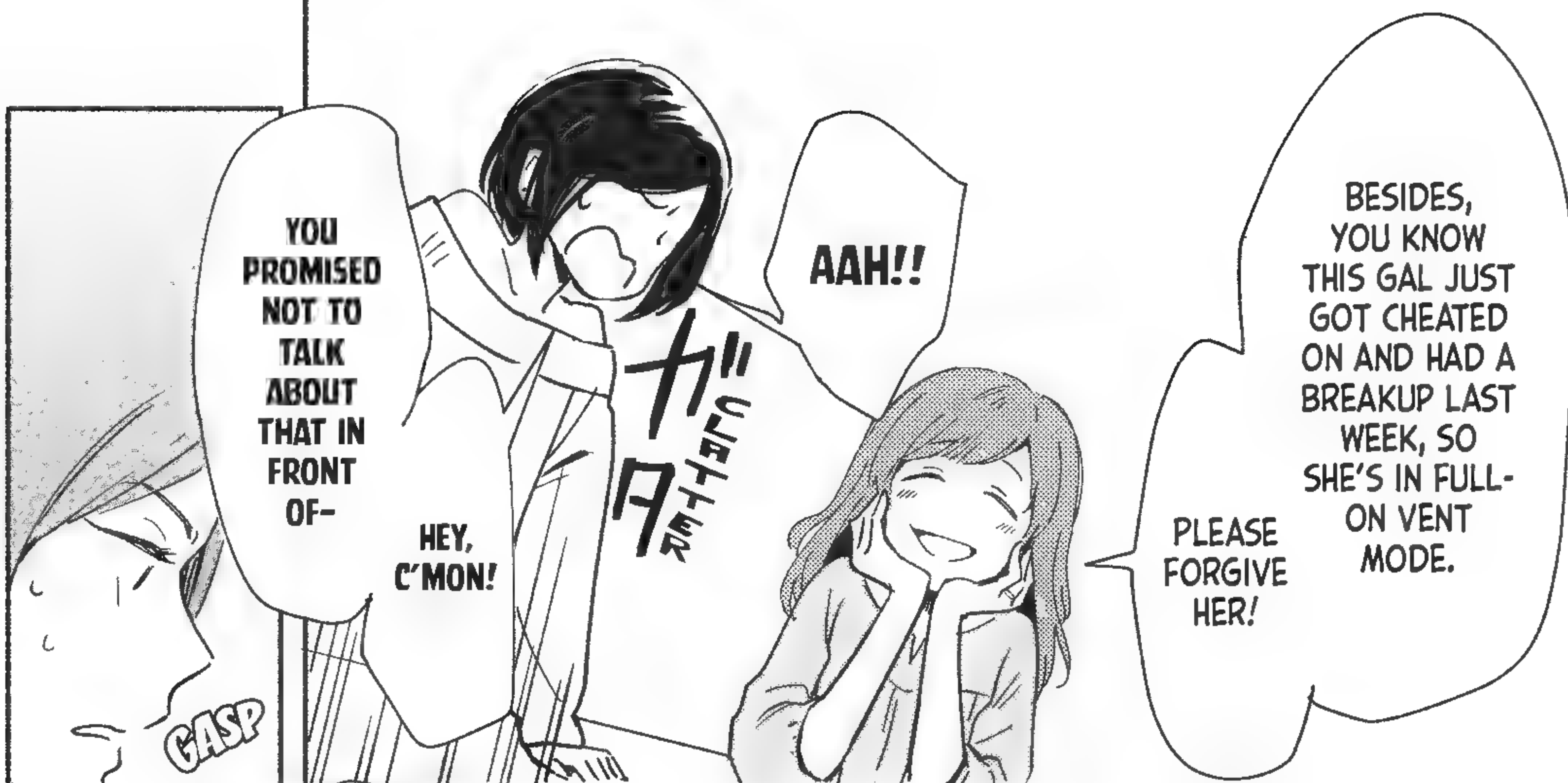
*Have some
confidence.*

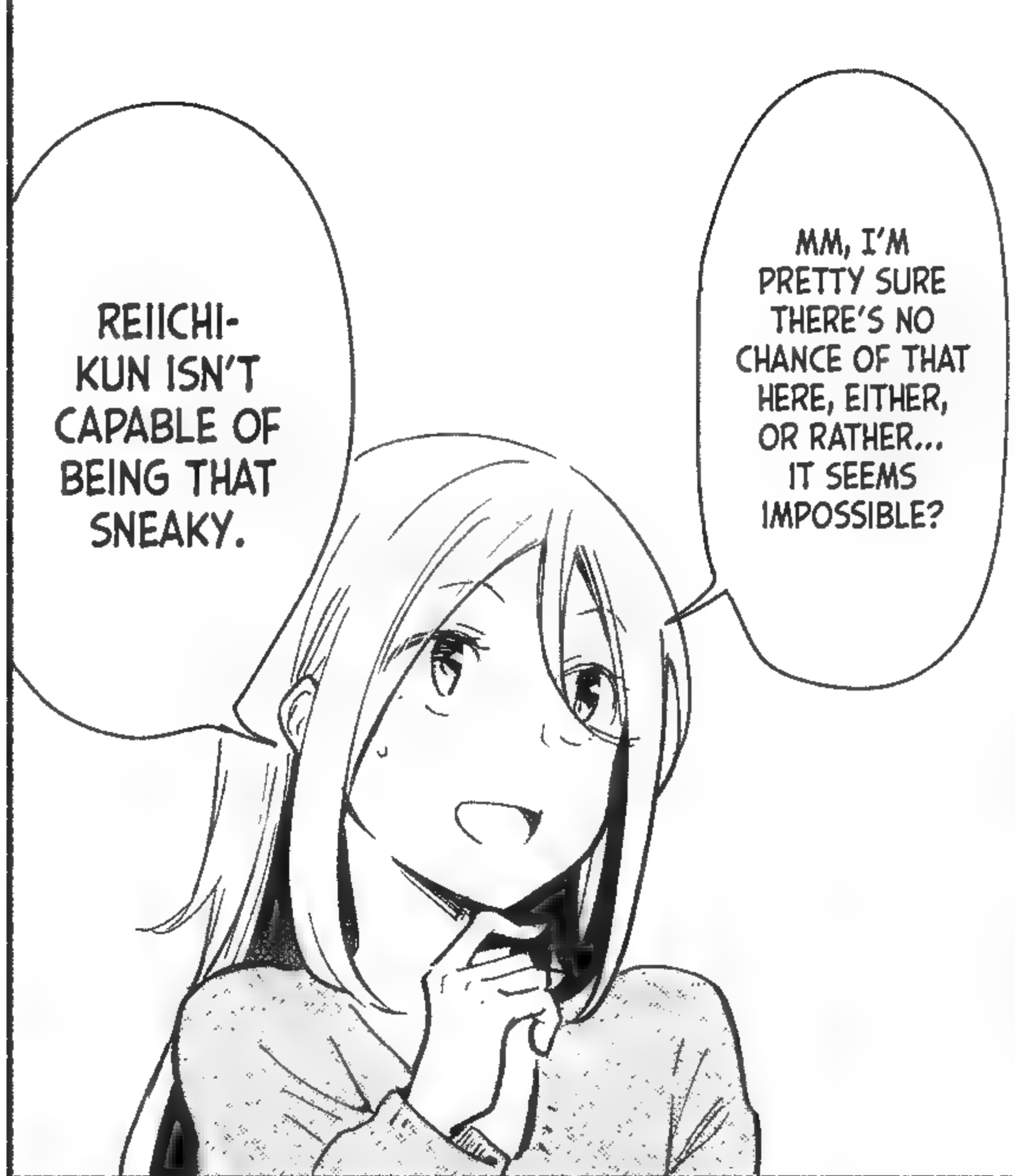


THE THINGS
AYAKA SAYS
ARE MOSTLY
ROOTED IN
JEALOUSY, SO
DON'T WORRY
ABOUT IT!

**WAAAAH!
I LOVE YOU,
YOCCHAN!!!**

*You're so
niice!*





REIICHI-KUN ISN'T CAPABLE OF BEING THAT SNEAKY.

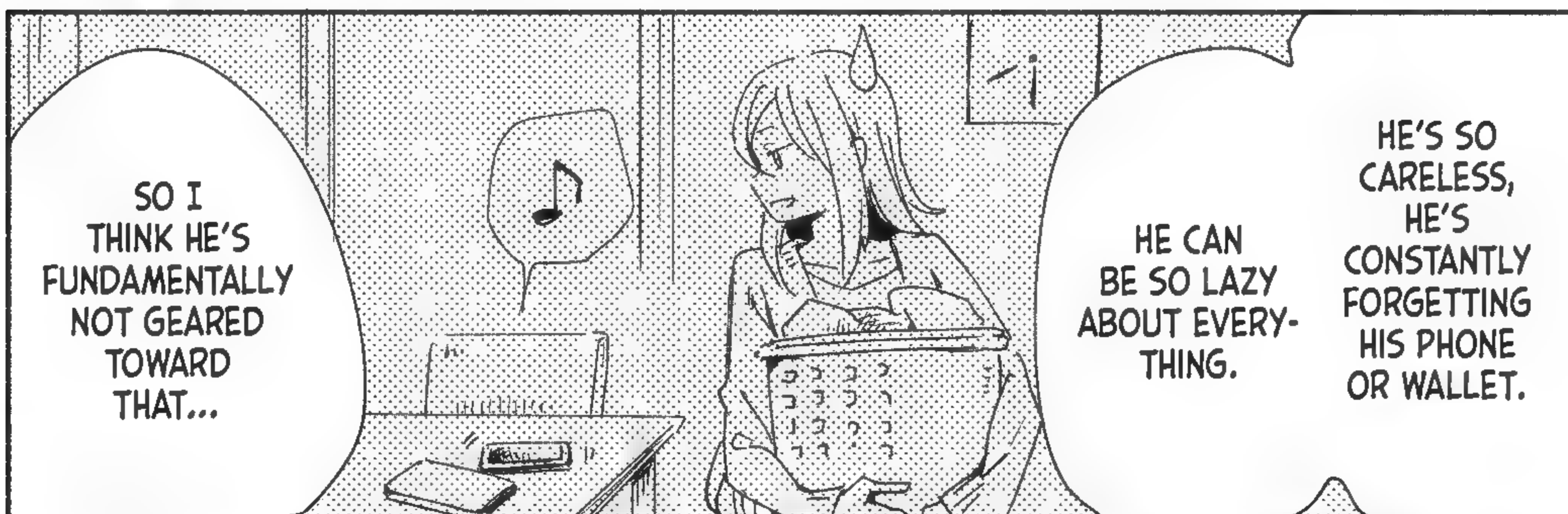
MM, I'M PRETTY SURE THERE'S NO CHANCE OF THAT HERE, EITHER, OR RATHER... IT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE?



It's a little sad.

WHAT ABOUT YOU, KAORU?

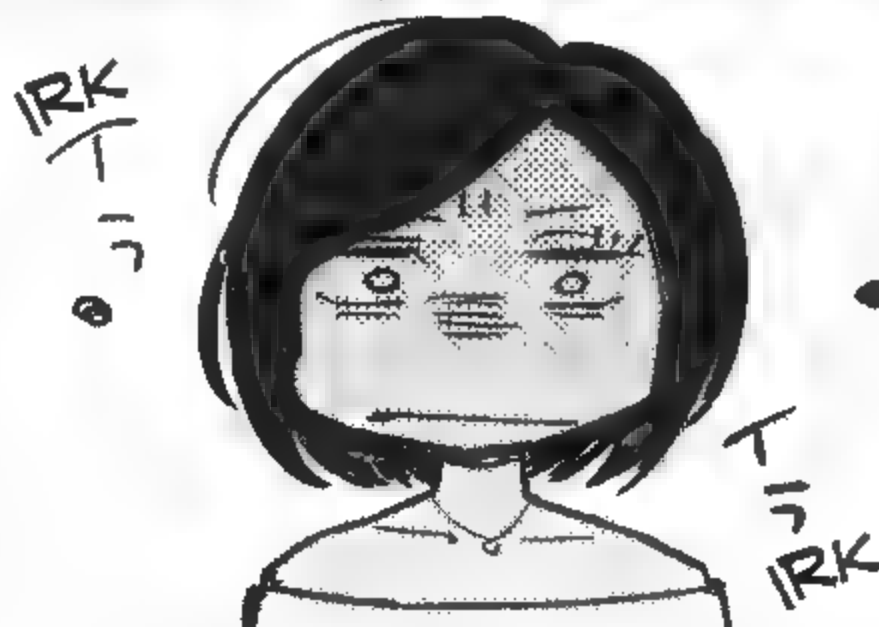
I DON'T THINK THAT'S REALLY LIKELY WITH ME. MAYBE BECAUSE MY HUSBAND HAS ABOUT A DECADE ON ME, BUT IT FEELS LIKE HE'S STAR-STRUCK WITH ME.



SO I THINK HE'S FUNDAMENTALLY NOT GEARED TOWARD THAT...

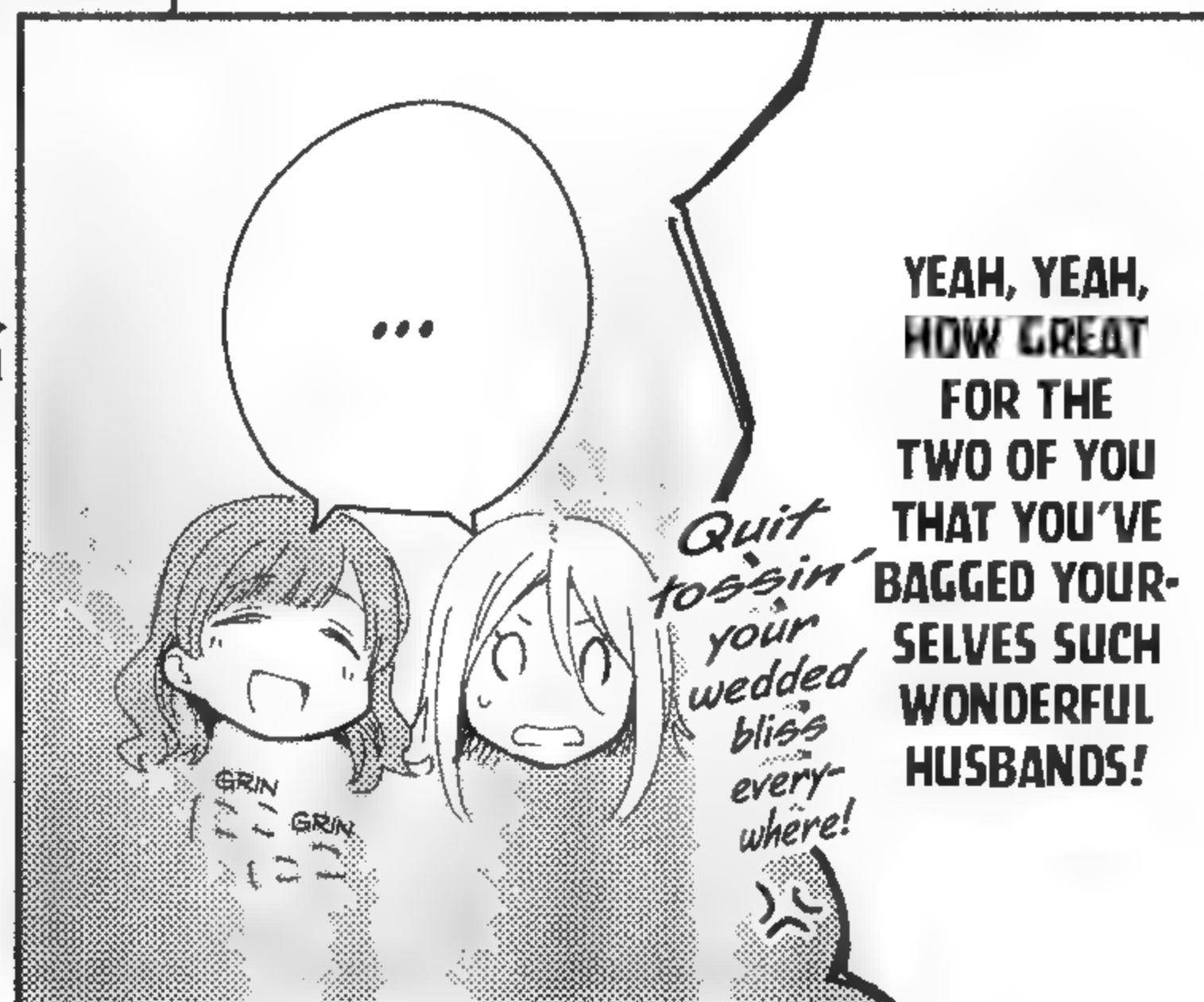
HE CAN BE SO LAZY ABOUT EVERYTHING.

HE'S SO CARELESS, HE'S CONSTANTLY FORGETTING HIS PHONE OR WALLET.



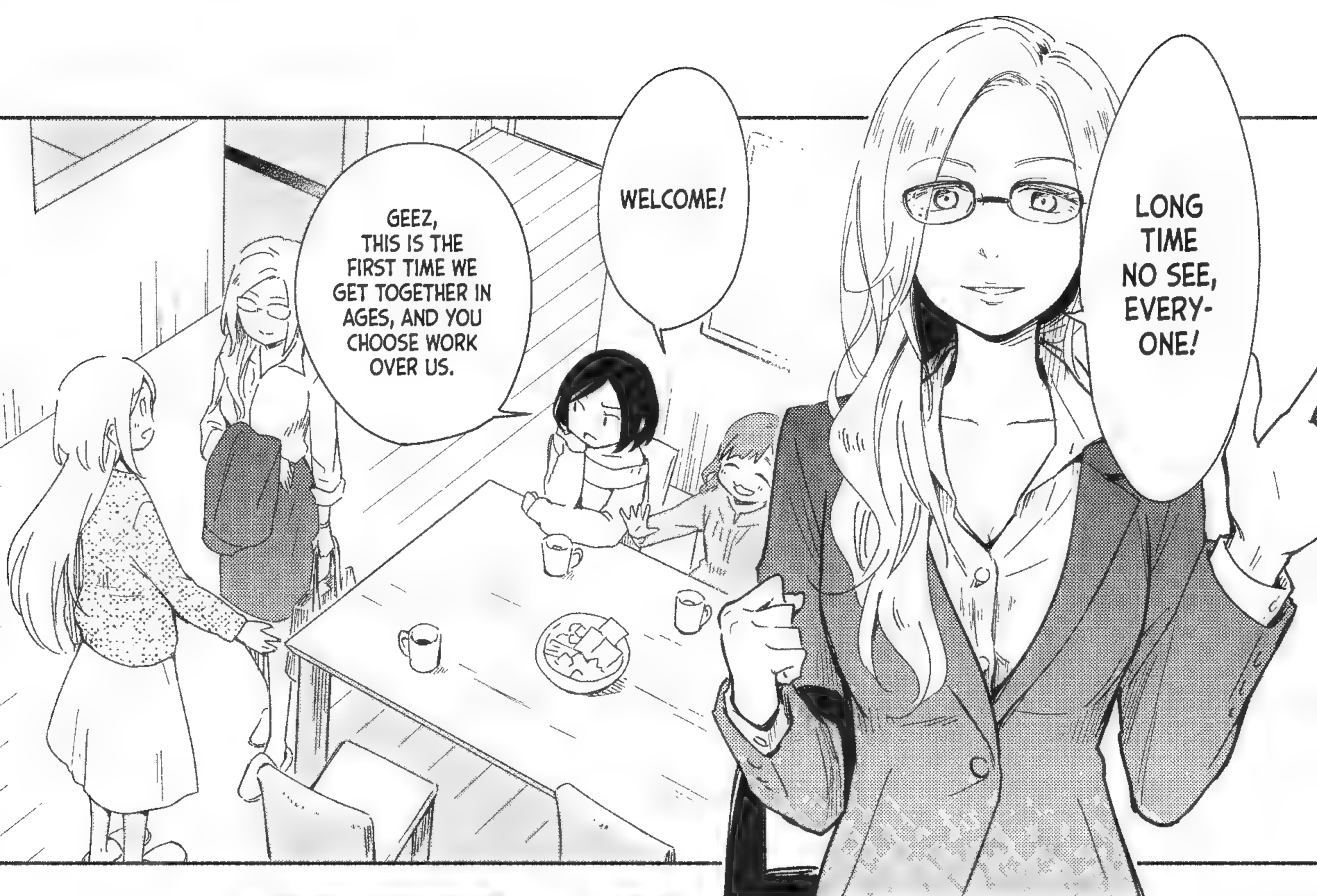
Ah!
OH, YEAH, SHE TEXTED ME.

HM?
WHO'S THAT? RISAKO?



YEAH, YEAH, HOW GREAT FOR THE TWO OF YOU THAT YOU'VE BAGGED YOURSELVES SUCH WONDERFUL HUSBANDS!

Quit tossin' your wedded bliss everywhere!



GEEZ,
THIS IS THE
FIRST TIME WE
GET TOGETHER IN
AGES, AND YOU
CHOOSE WORK
OVER US.

WELCOME!

LONG
TIME
NO SEE,
EVERY-
ONE!



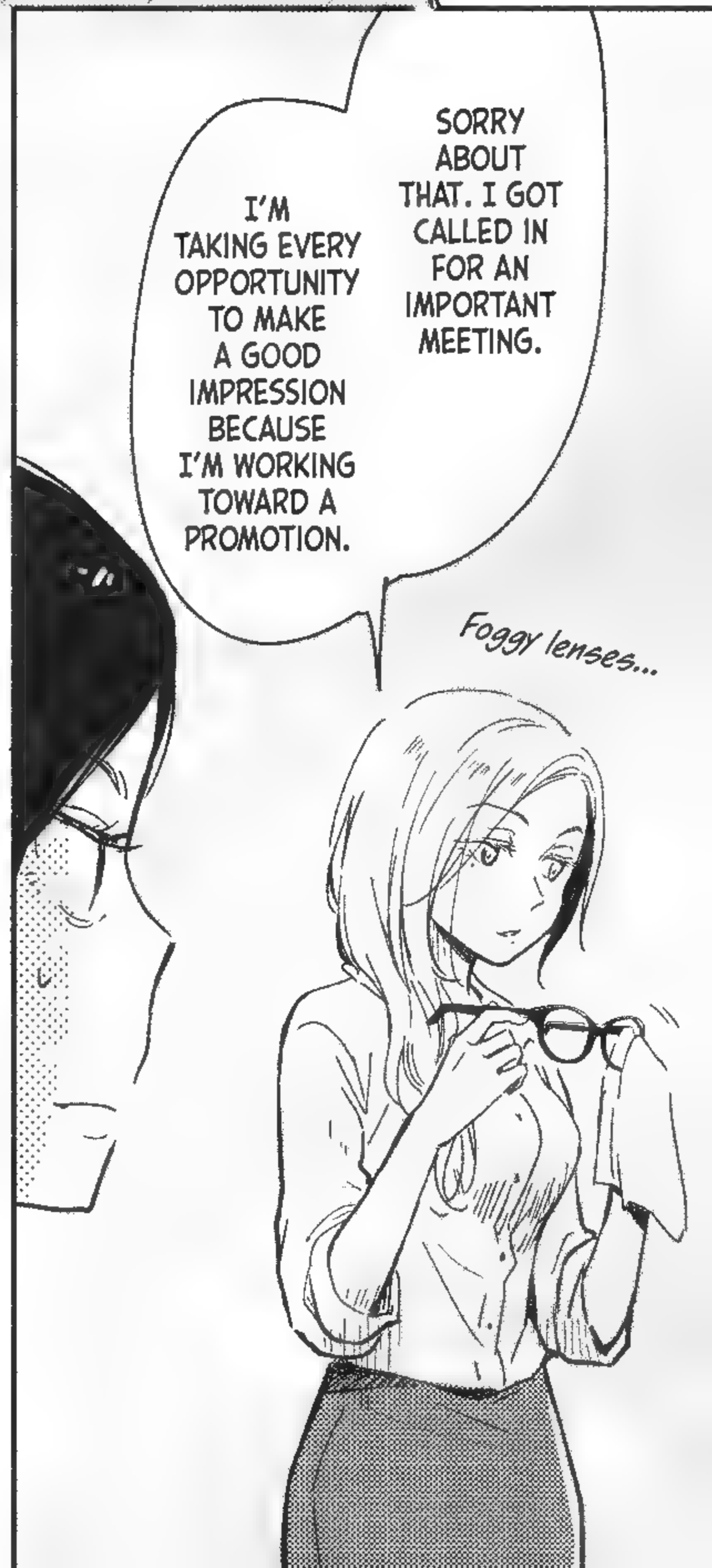
Wah?
THAT'S
NOT FAIR!
A BEAUTY
WHO CAN EVEN
NEUTRALIZE
THAT KIND
OF INSULT?!

*You didn't
even get
annoyed!*

THAT
MAY BE
TRUE...

...BUT
I WOULDN'T
WANT PEOPLE
TO THINK ALL
I'VE GOT IS
MY LOOKS.

I FEEL
LIKE YOU
COULD SNAG
YOURSELF A
PRETTY SWEET
POSITION JUST
BASED ON
YOUR LOOKS,
RISAKO...



SORRY
ABOUT
THAT. I GOT
CALLED IN
FOR AN
IMPORTANT
MEETING.

I'M
TAKING EVERY
OPPORTUNITY
TO MAKE
A GOOD
IMPRESSION
BECAUSE
I'M WORKING
TOWARD A
PROMOTION.

Foggy lenses...



Oh!
THAT'S
RIGHT!

NOW THAT
EVERYONE'S
HERE, I'VE
GOT AN
ANNOUNCEMENT
TO MAKE!

CLAP

1 to 10

h

W



... **WHAT?!**

SO!
IT SEEMS
THAT I'VE
BEEN
BLESSED
WITH A
CHILD!



*I
haven't
asked.*

SPEAKING
OF, HAVE
YOU TWO
STARTED
THINKING
ABOUT
CHILDREN
YET,
KAORU?



WAIT
A MINUTE!
I HAVEN'T
HEARD
ANYTHING
ABOUT
THIS!

I
WANTED
TO TELL ALL
OF YOU AT
ONCE!

YOU JUST
SAID THAT
WITHOUT ANY
PREAMBLE,
HUH...

*So
casual...*

AAAH!

**CON-
GRATS!!!**



HEH HEH,
THANKS!

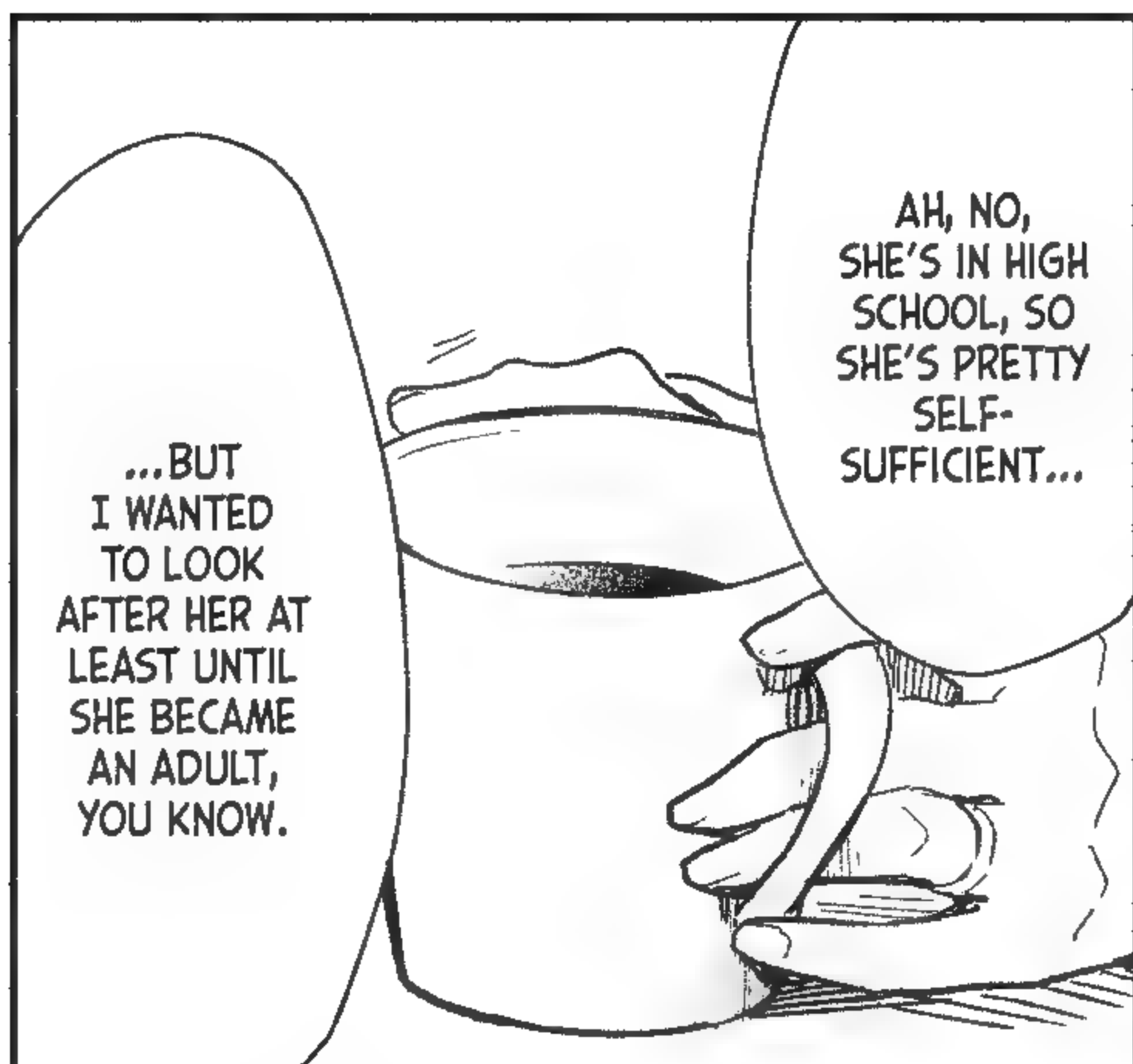
Yeah!

EEE

EEE

YOU
WERE
ALWAYS
SAYING
THAT YOU
WANTED
A CHILD,
YOCCHAN!

I'M
HAPPY
FOR
YOU!



...BUT I WANTED TO LOOK AFTER HER AT LEAST UNTIL SHE BECAME AN ADULT, YOU KNOW.

AH, NO, SHE'S IN HIGH SCHOOL, SO SHE'S PRETTY SELF-SUFFICIENT...

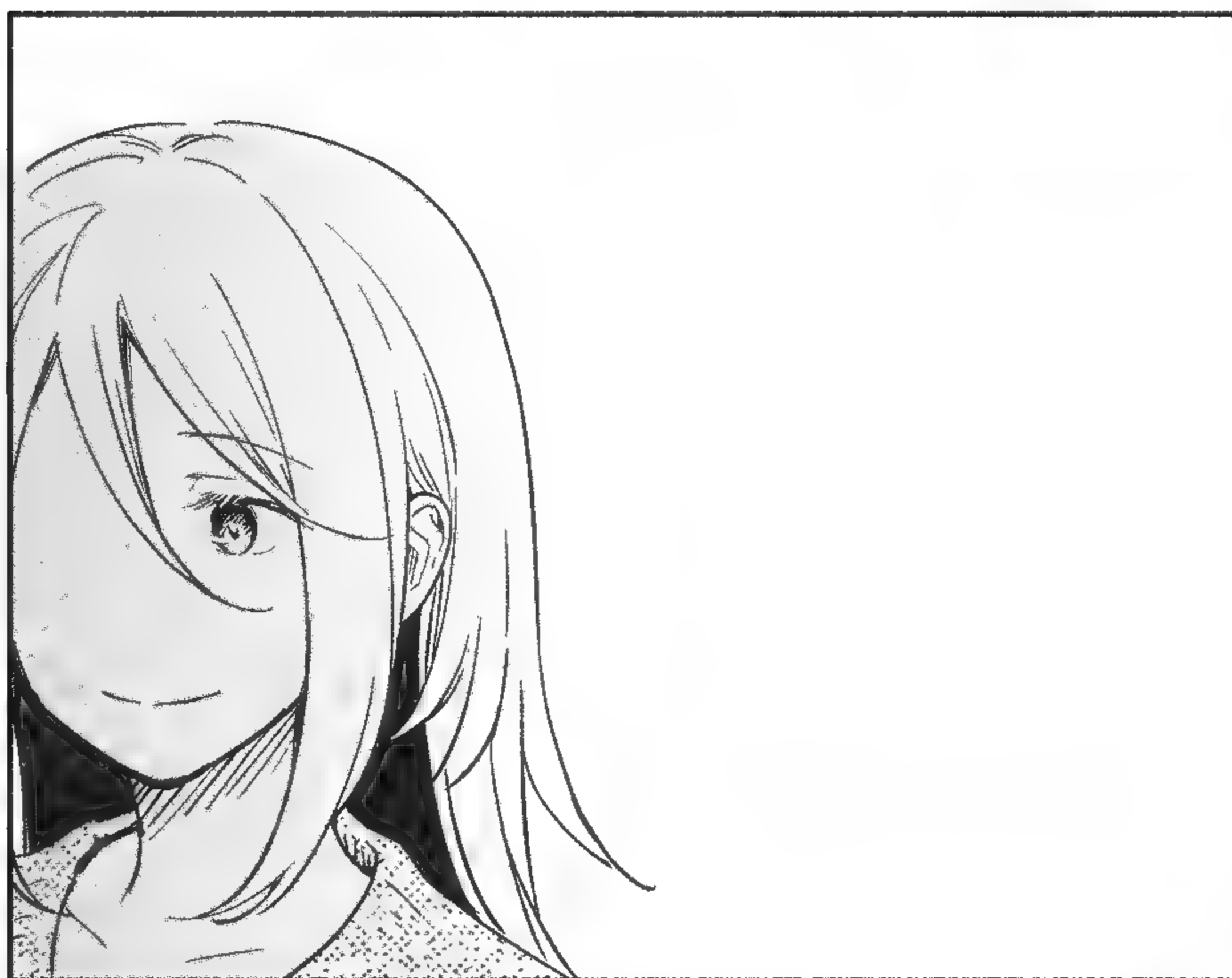


IS HIS SISTER REALLY THAT YOUNG?

Oh?



MM, I MEAN, RIGHT NOW WE'RE LOOKING AFTER HIS LITTLE SISTER.



I'VE KNOWN HER SINCE SHE WAS LITTLE, AFTER ALL.

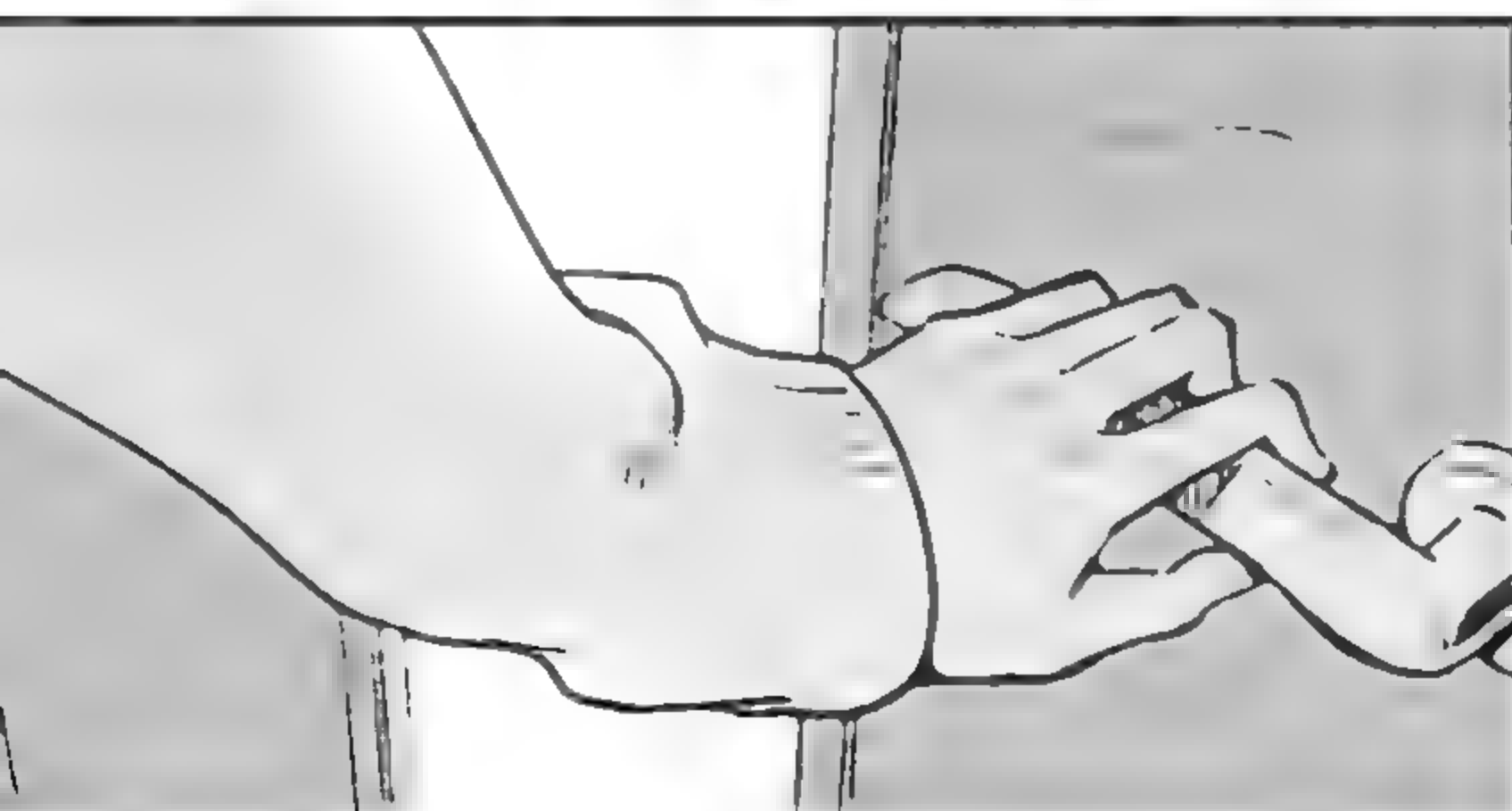
I KNOW SHE'S JUST YOUR IN-LAW, BUT YOU REALLY DO LOVE HER, HUH?

Are you a saint?



306

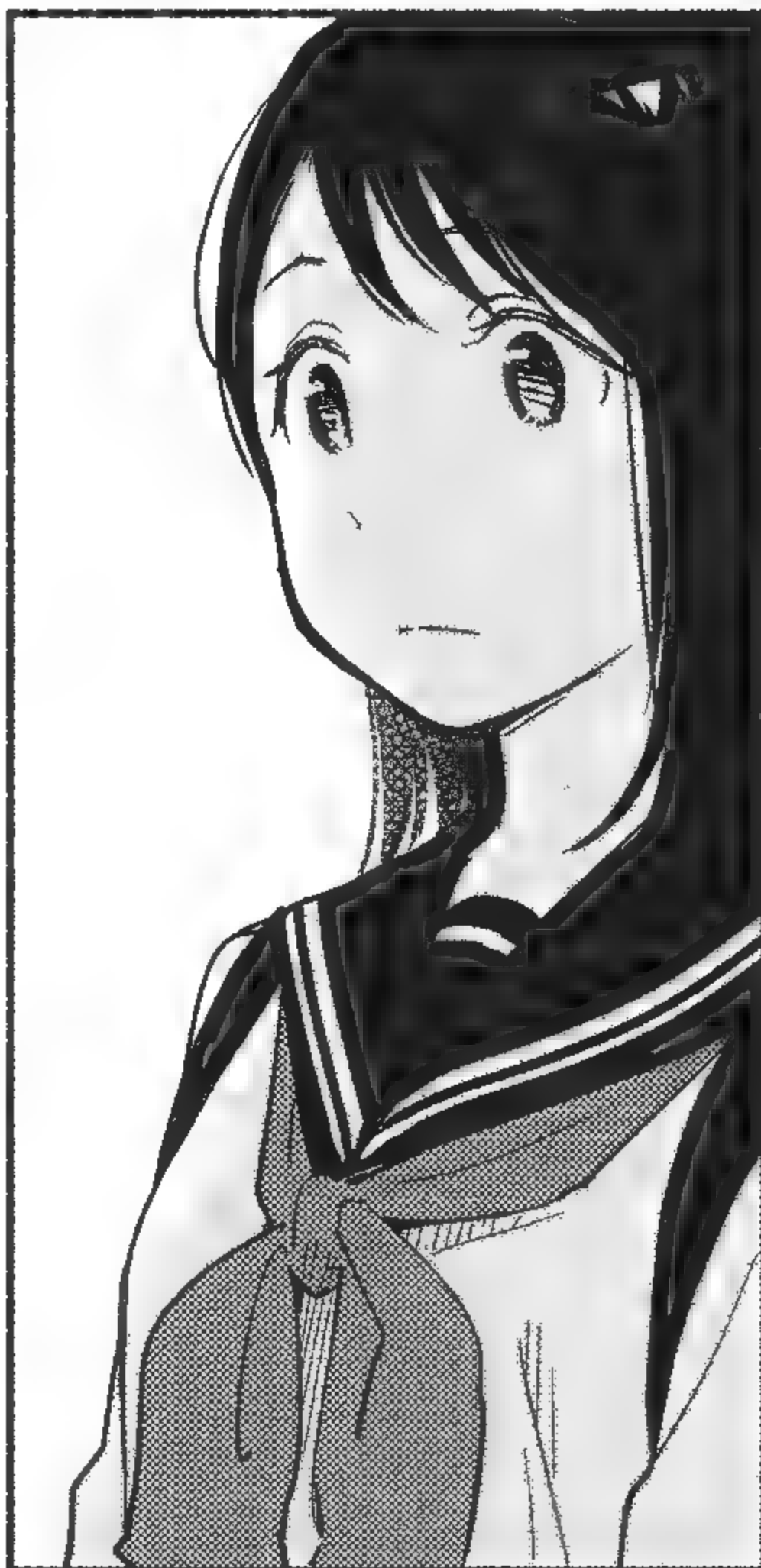
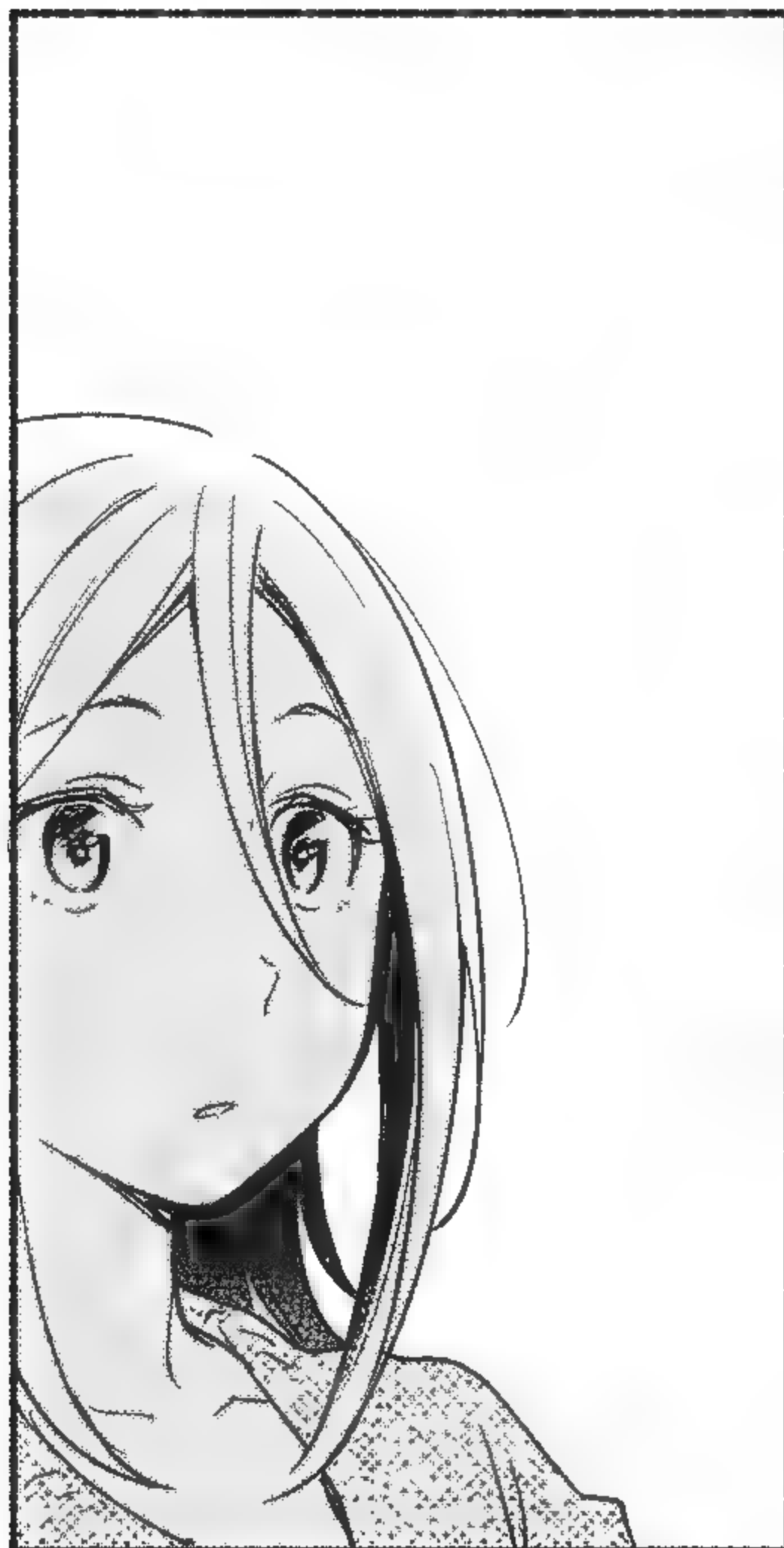
SHUT
お休みなさい



Don't mind us!

OH!

WELCOME
HOME, UTA-
CHAN!



WE
WERE
JUST
THINKING
ABOUT
WRAP-
PING UP
SOON,
SO—

SORRY
FOR
ALL THE
RUCKUS.



**I'LL
BE
OFF!**

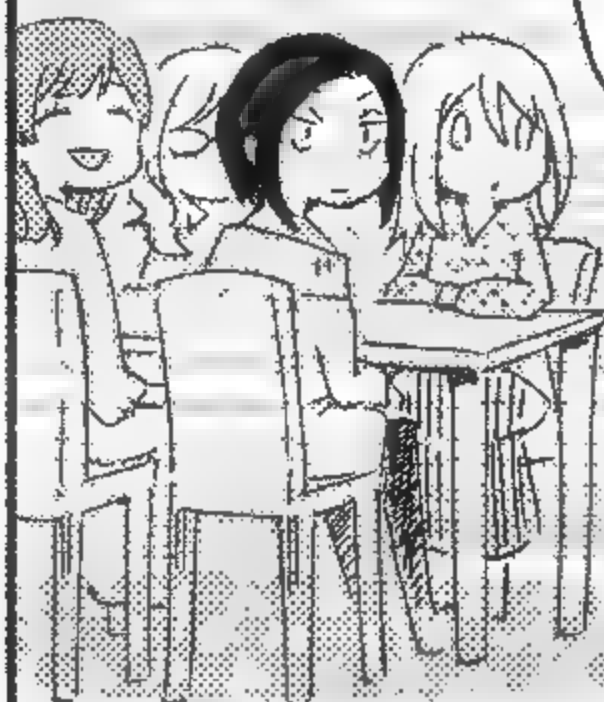
**... AT
HOME!**

**PLEASE
FEEL FREE
TO MAKE
YOUR-
SELVES...**

... OH!

UHM!

**NO
BOW**





PRETTY
SURE THIS IS
THE FIRST
I'M HEARING
ABOUT THIS.

A
KID...
HUH?



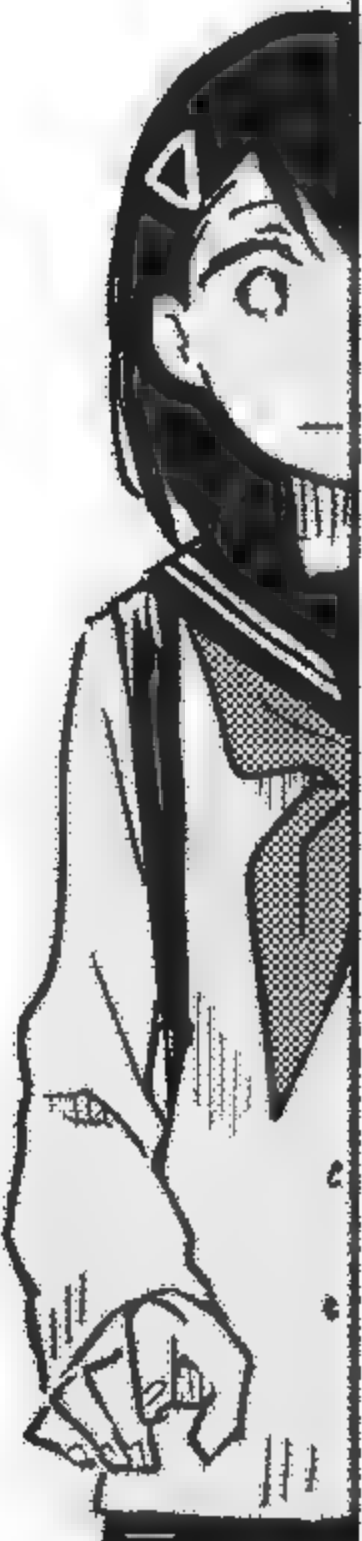
I GUESS YOU WOULD TALK
ABOUT THAT SORT OF
THING WITH FRIENDS...



H...
HUH?

WHAT
IS THIS
FEELING?

IN OTHER
WORDS...



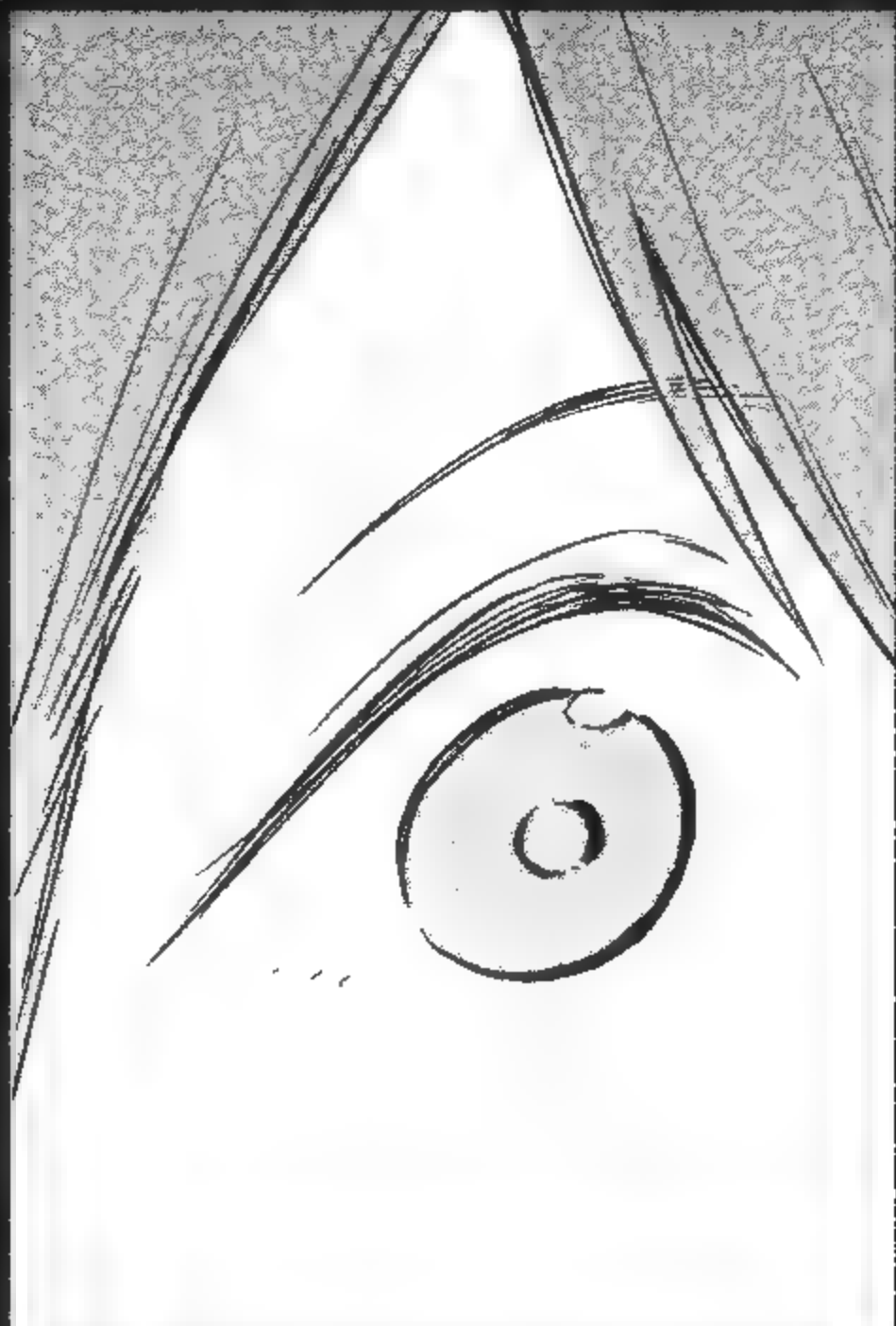
KAORU-
SAN THINKS
ABOUT THESE
THINGS LIKE
A NORMAL
PERSON...

...OR
SOME-
THING.

Obviously...

A black and white manga-style illustration showing a close-up of two hands. One hand is reaching out from the right, and the other is reaching out from the left, with their fingers interlaced. The background is dark and textured with halftone dots.

AM I
AFRAID
OF A
FUTURE...

A black and white manga-style illustration of a person's face, focusing on the eyes. The eyes are wide open, with large pupils and visible eyelashes, conveying a sense of shock or fear. The background is dark and textured with halftone dots.

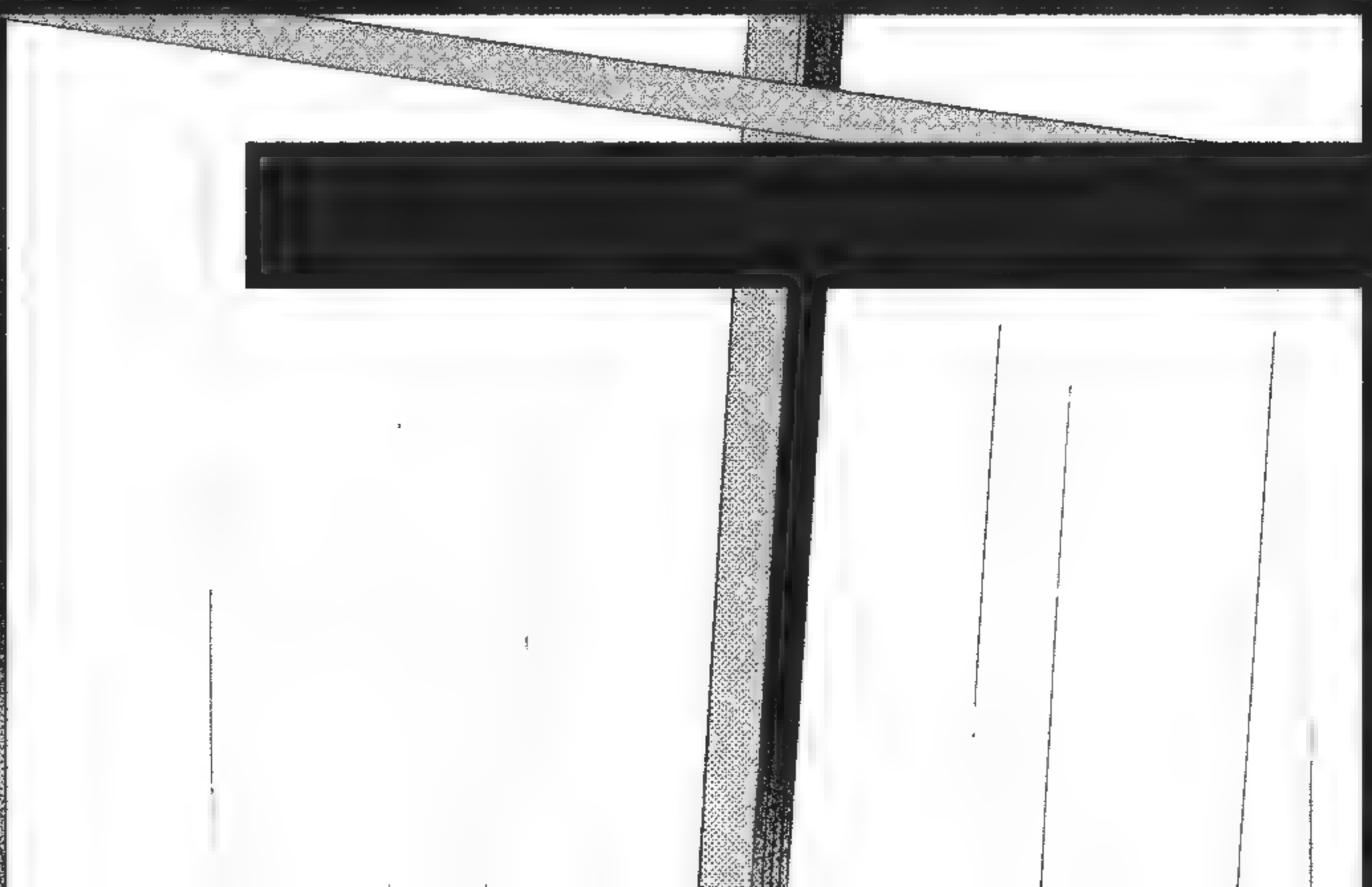
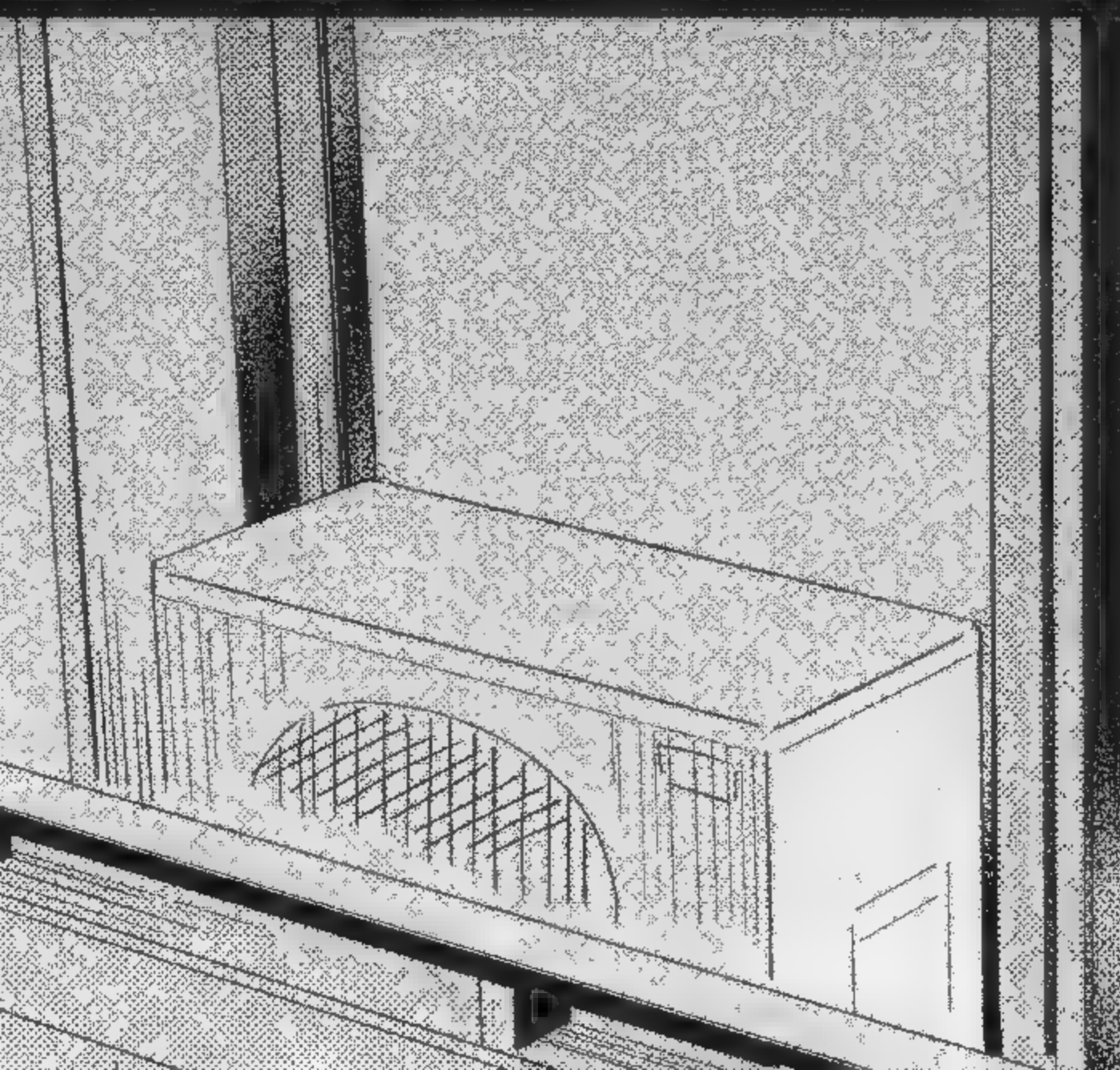
...WHERE
KAORU-SAN
WOULD BE EVEN
FURTHER AWAY
FROM ME THAN
SHE IS NOW?

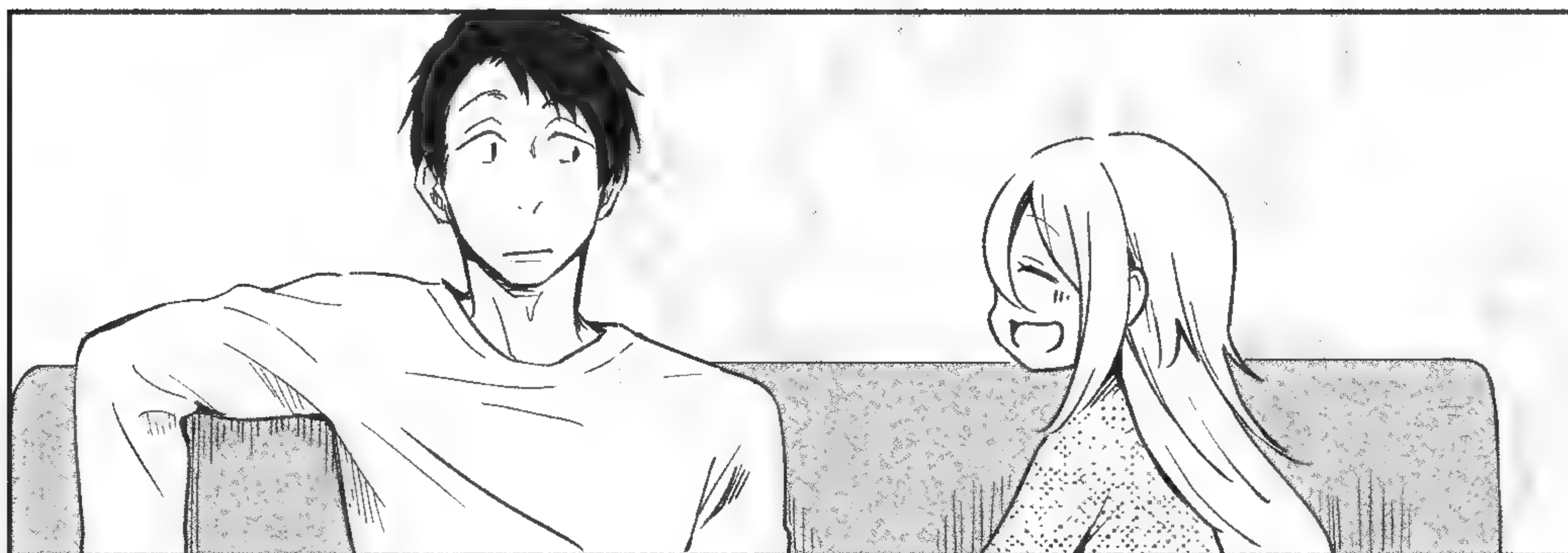
A black and white manga-style illustration of a hand reaching out towards a window. The hand is positioned on the right side of the frame, with fingers spread. The window is in the background, showing vertical lines and a textured surface.

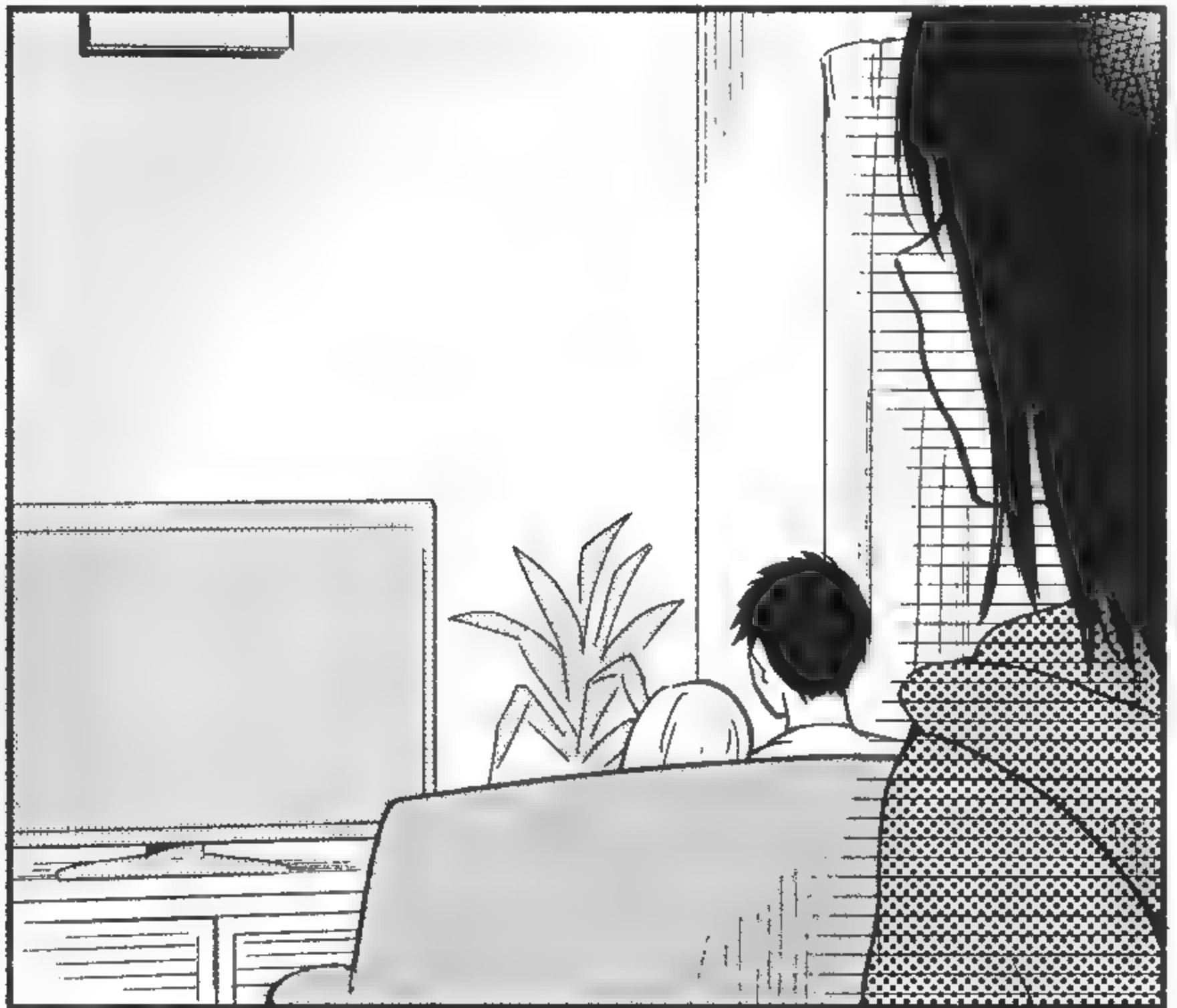
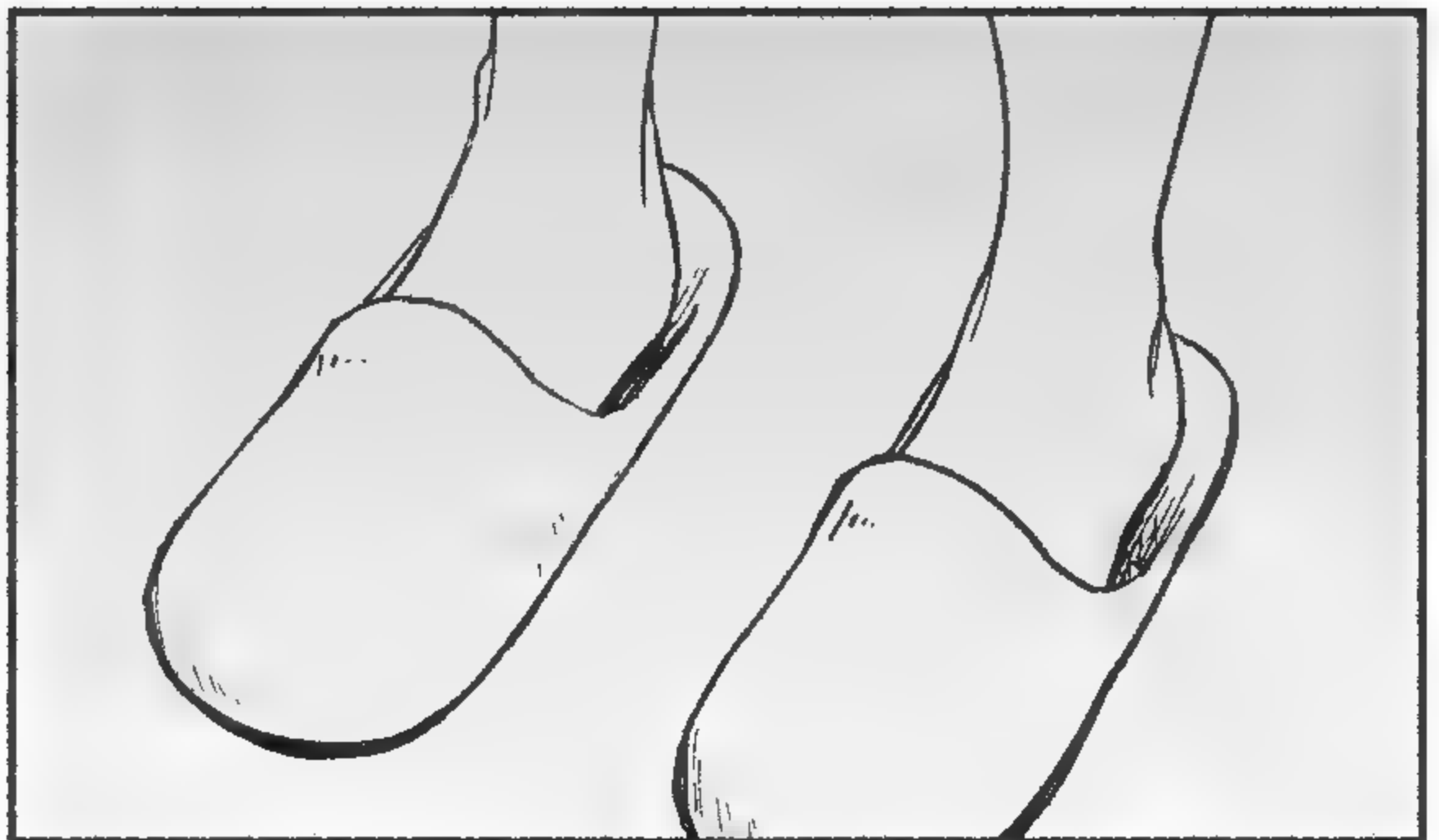
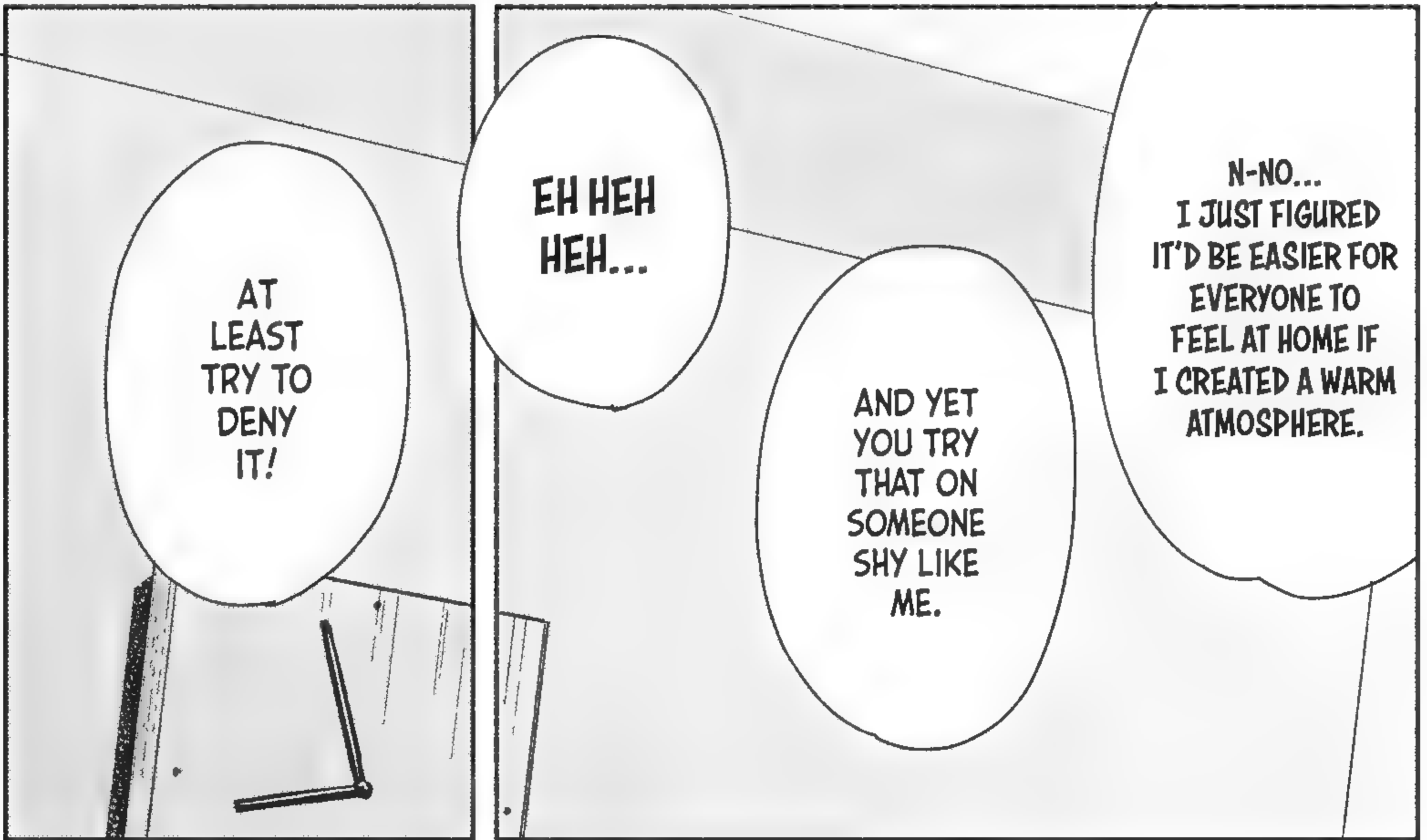
A PLACE
WHERE I WOULDN'T
BE ABLE TO
REACH HER-
FOR GOOD?

...AFRAID?

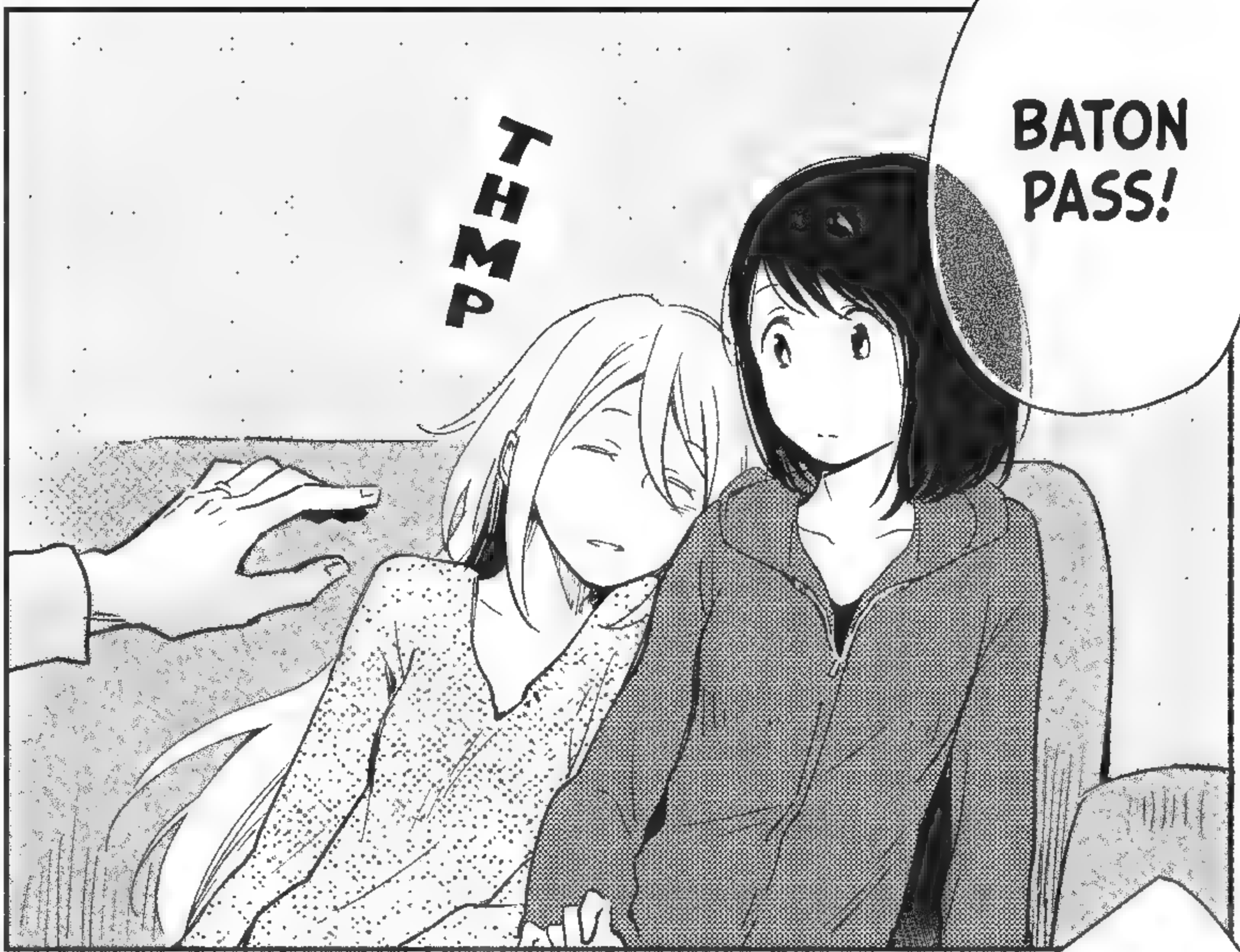
WHY AM
I STILL
HOLDING
OUT
HOPE...?











HEH

BATON
PASS!



YOU CAN
SPARE 30
MINUTES.

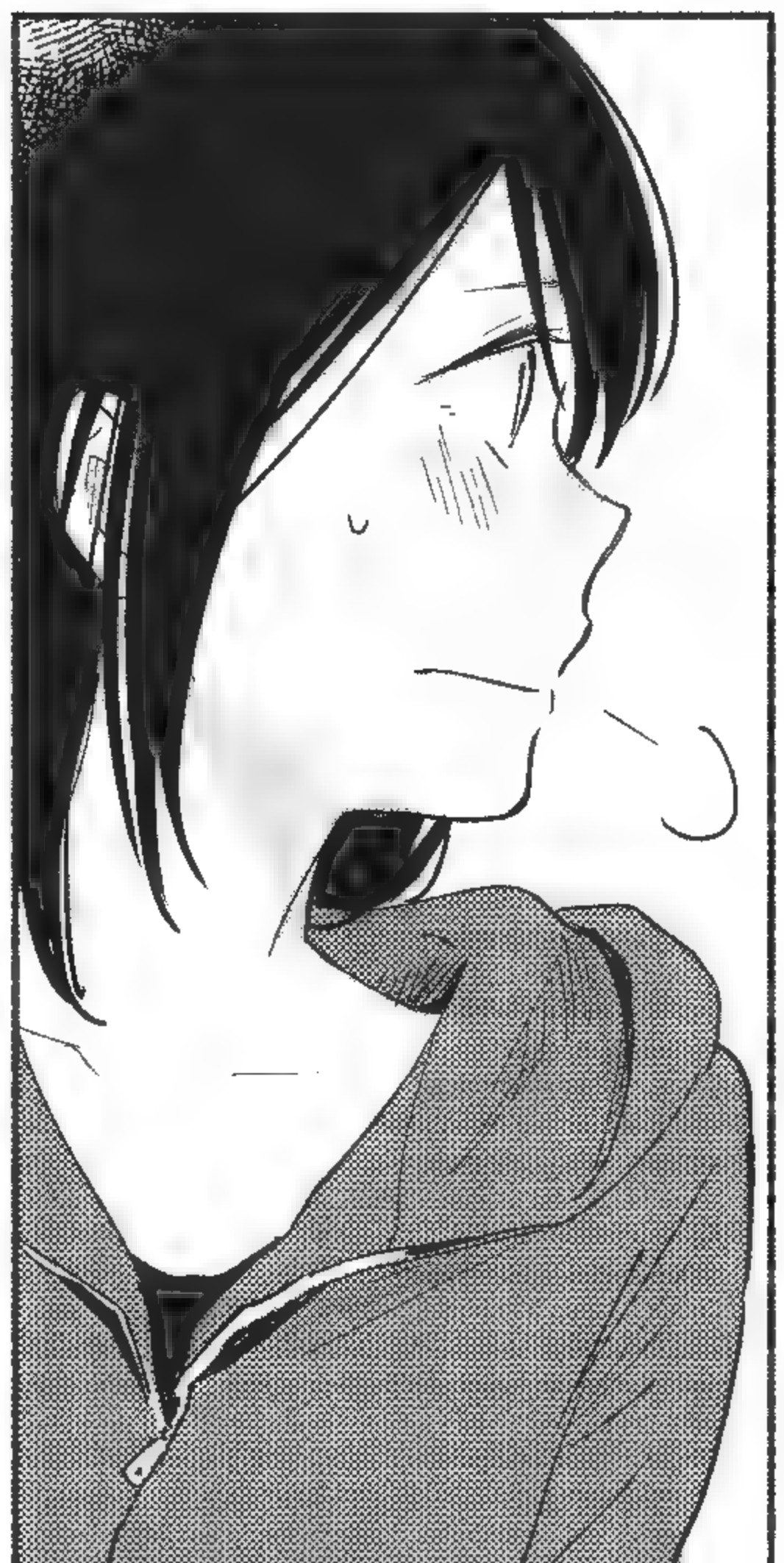
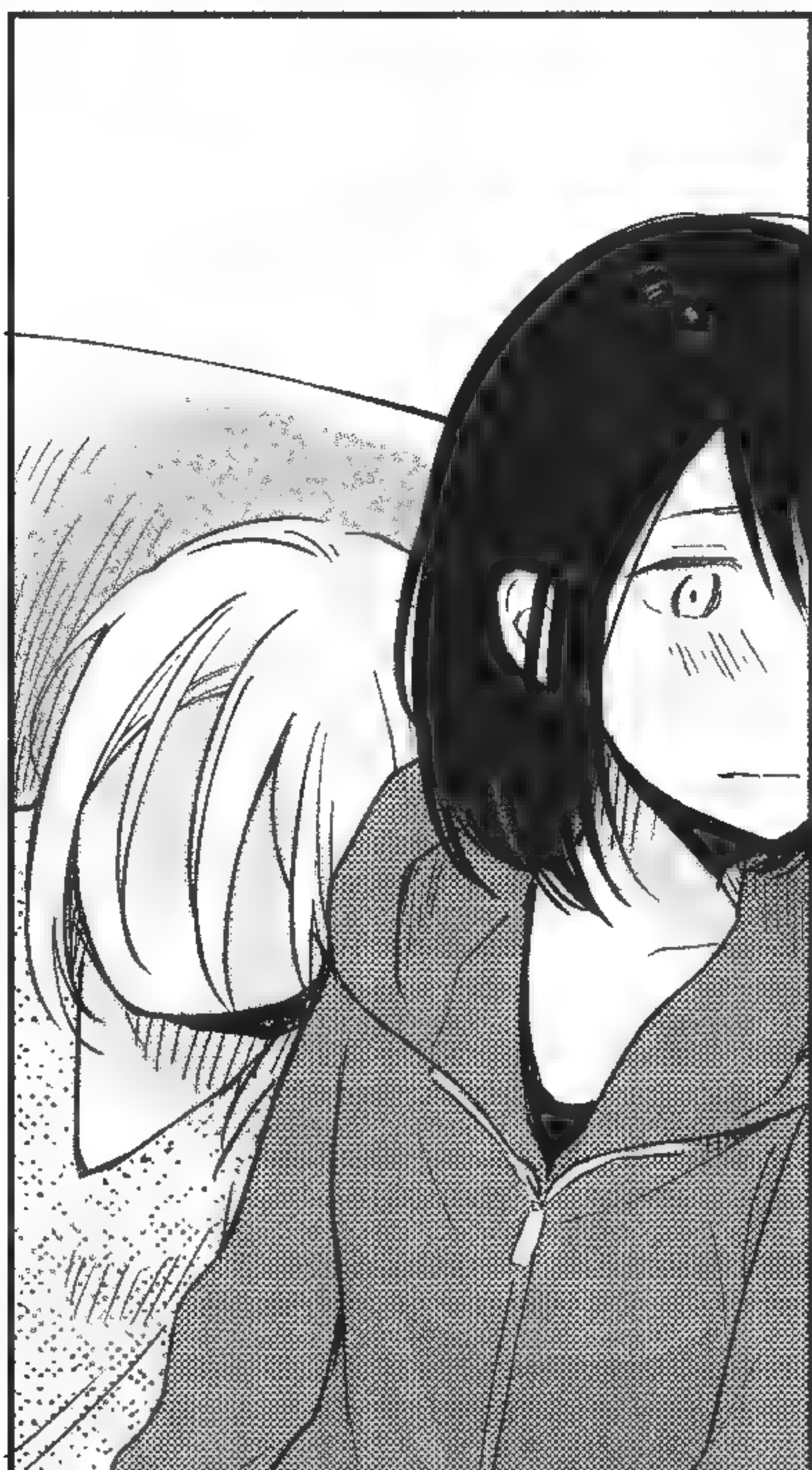


HEY,
WAIT
A-

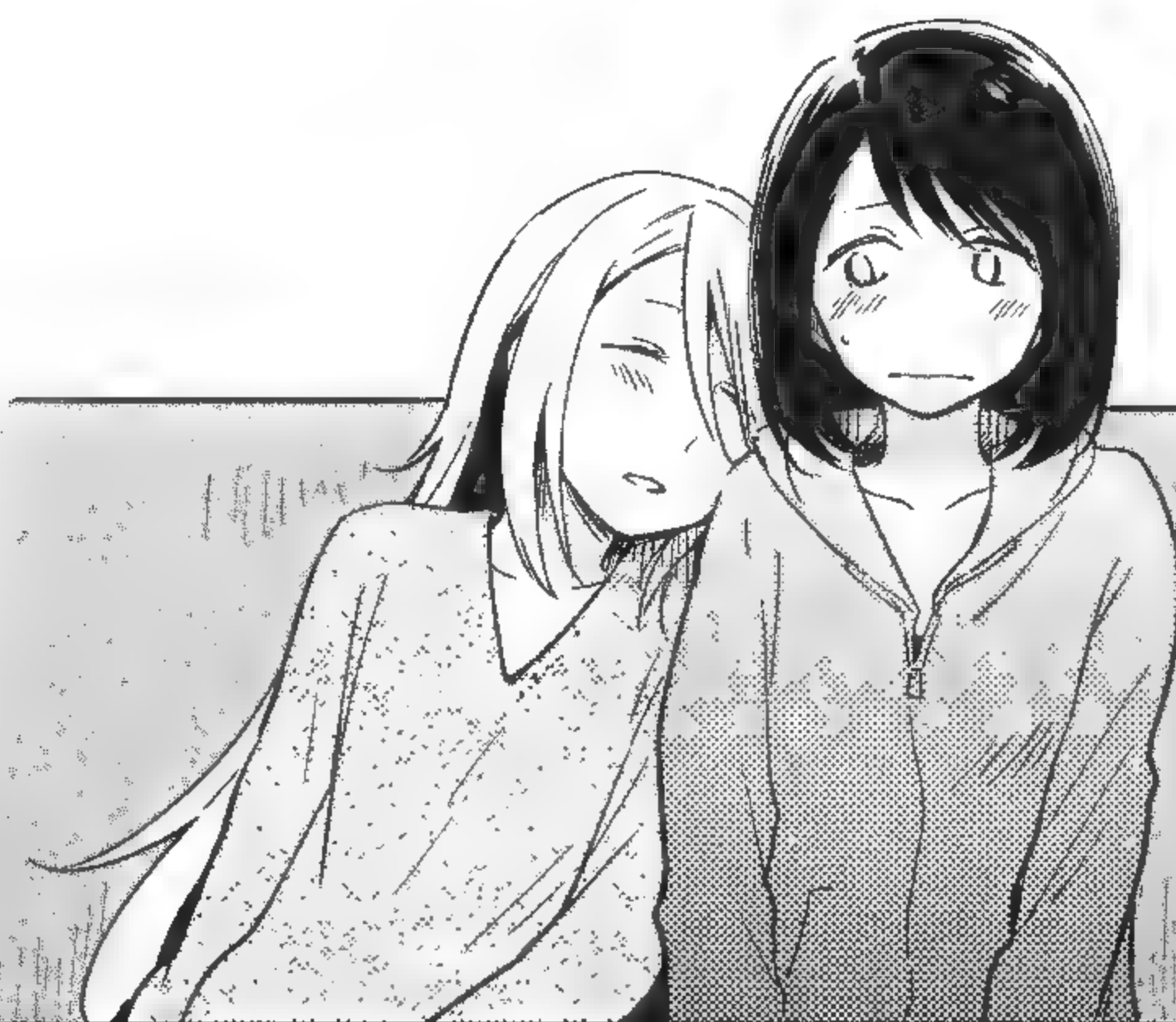
R... REI-
KUN!

*I have
studying
to do...!*

FACED
WITH A
LOVE
I HAVE NO
CHOICE
BUT TO
ABANDON...

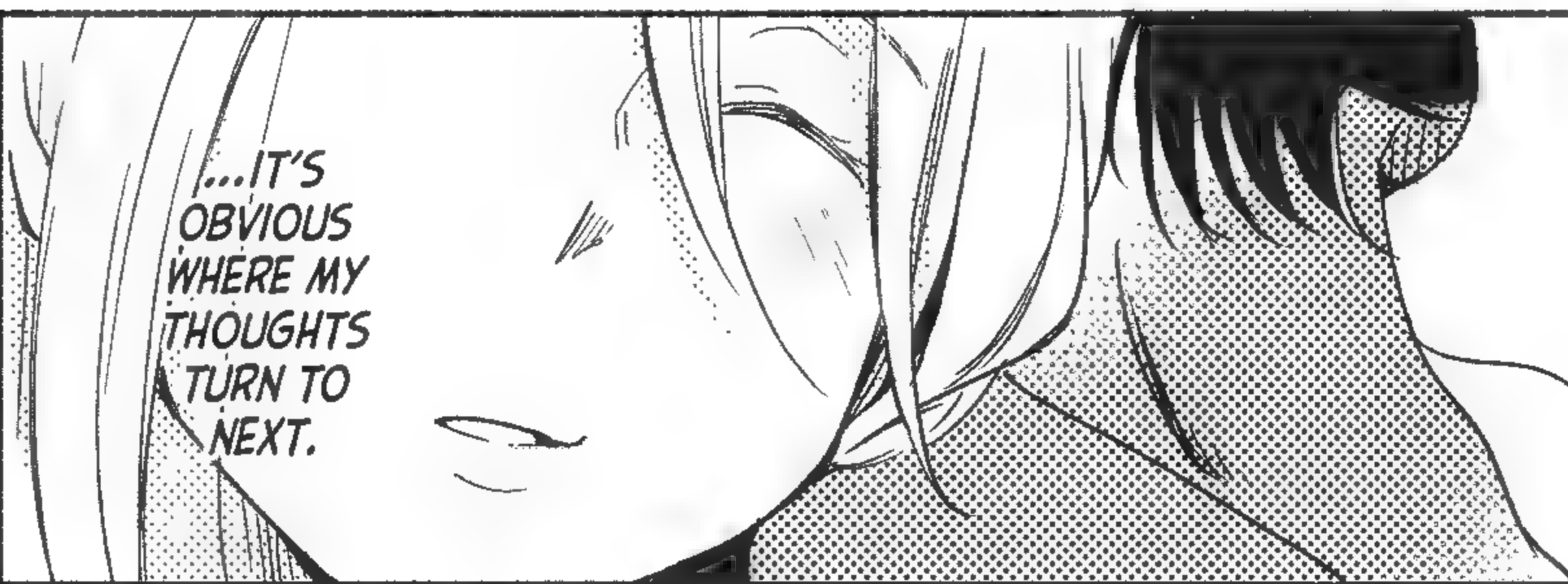


I'VE
TRIED SO
MANY TIMES
TO CONTROL
MYSELF, TO
DENY IT...

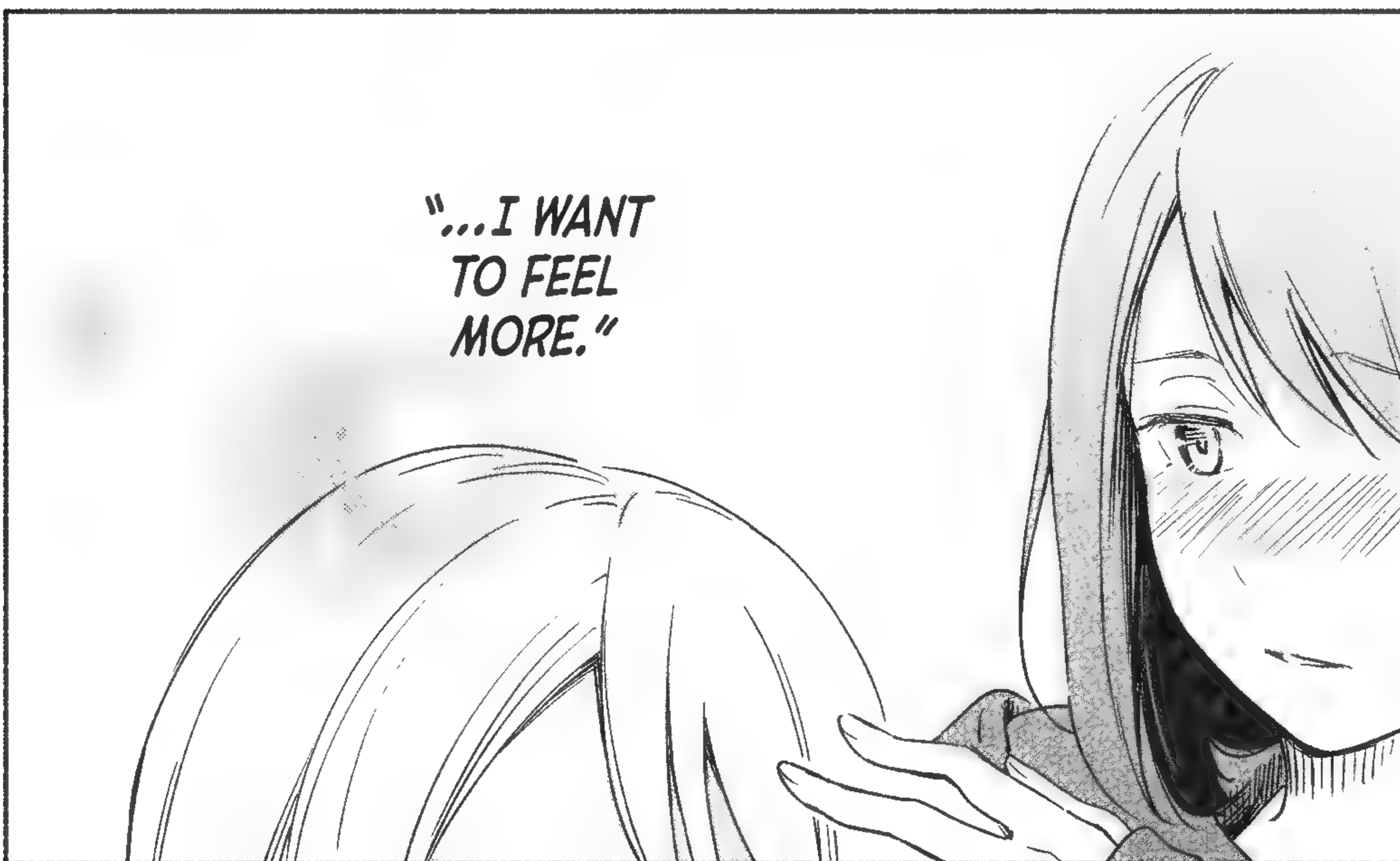


...IT'S
OBVIOUS
WHERE MY
THOUGHTS
TURN TO
NEXT.

BUT EVERY
TIME I GET
A TASTE OF
EVEN THE
SLIGHTEST
BIT OF THAT
WARMTH...



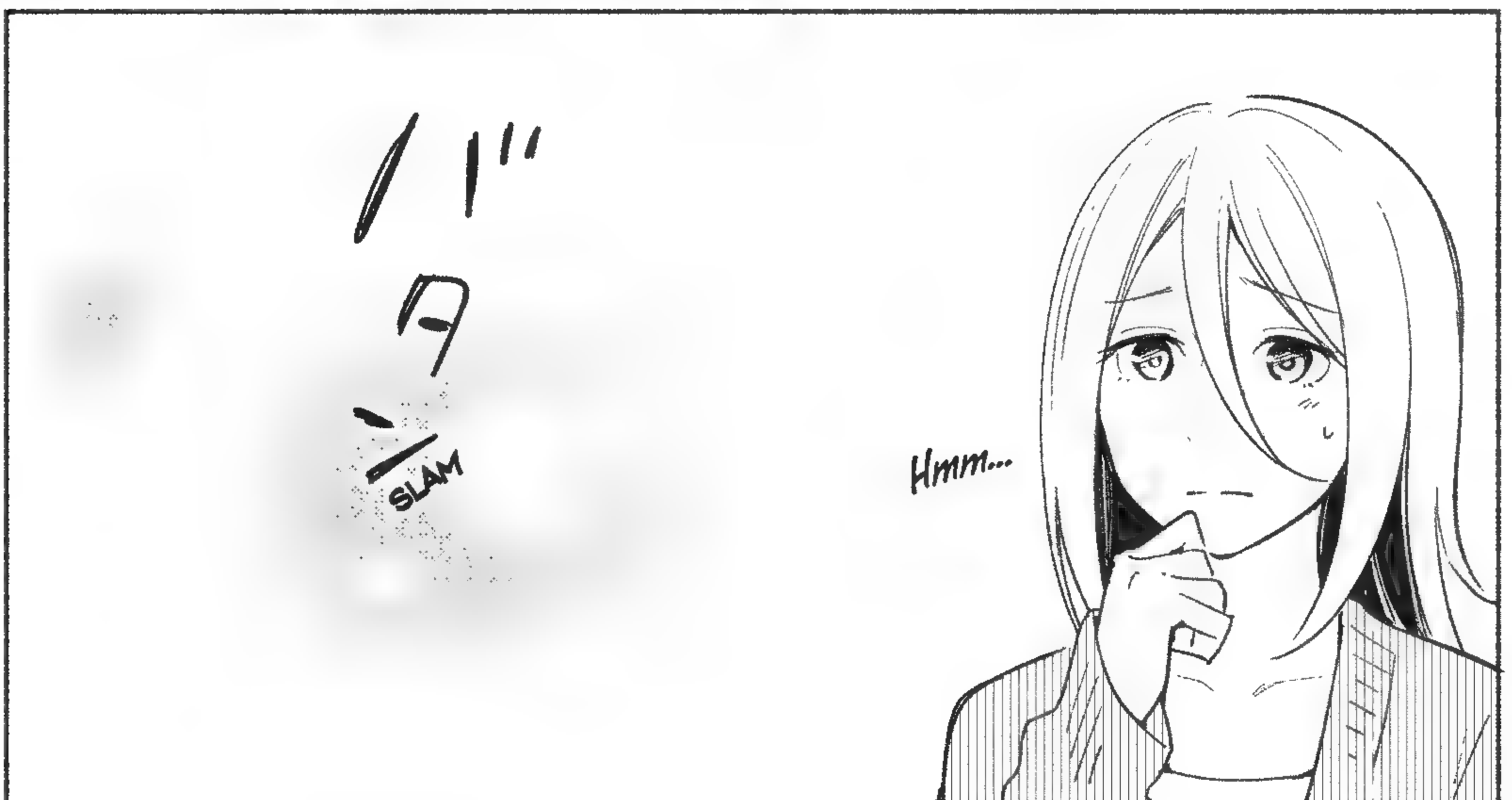
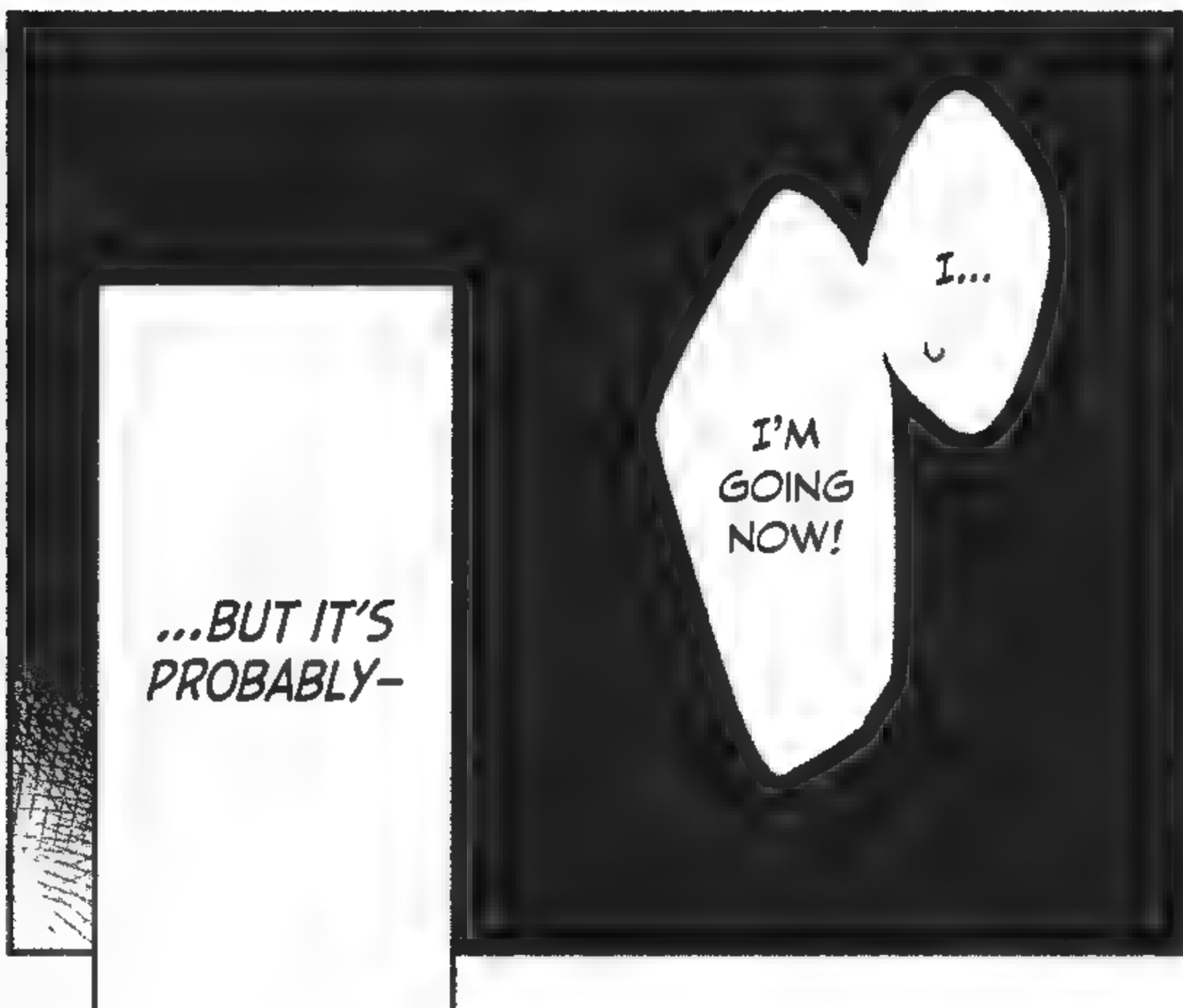
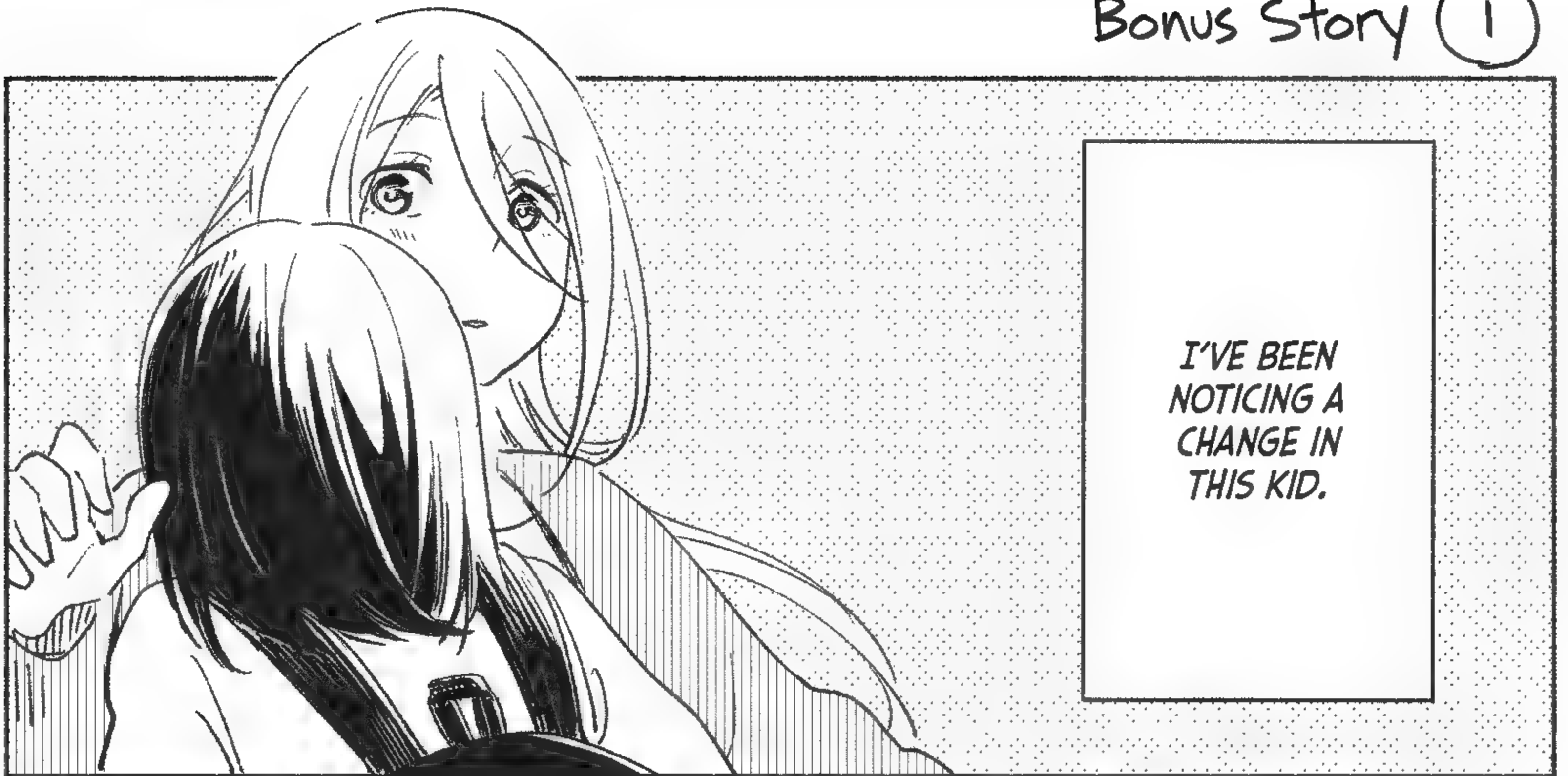
"...I WANT
TO FEEL
MORE."

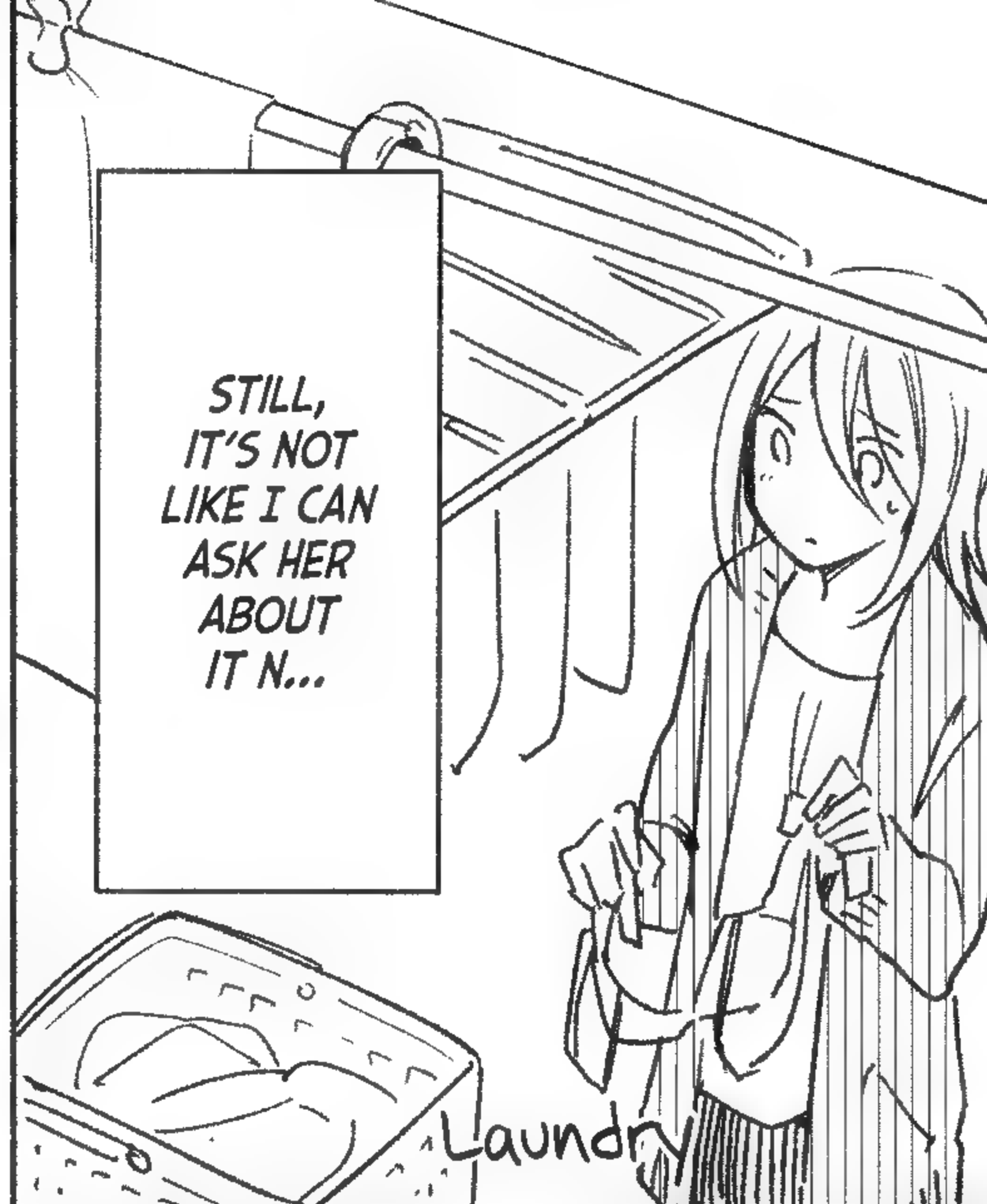
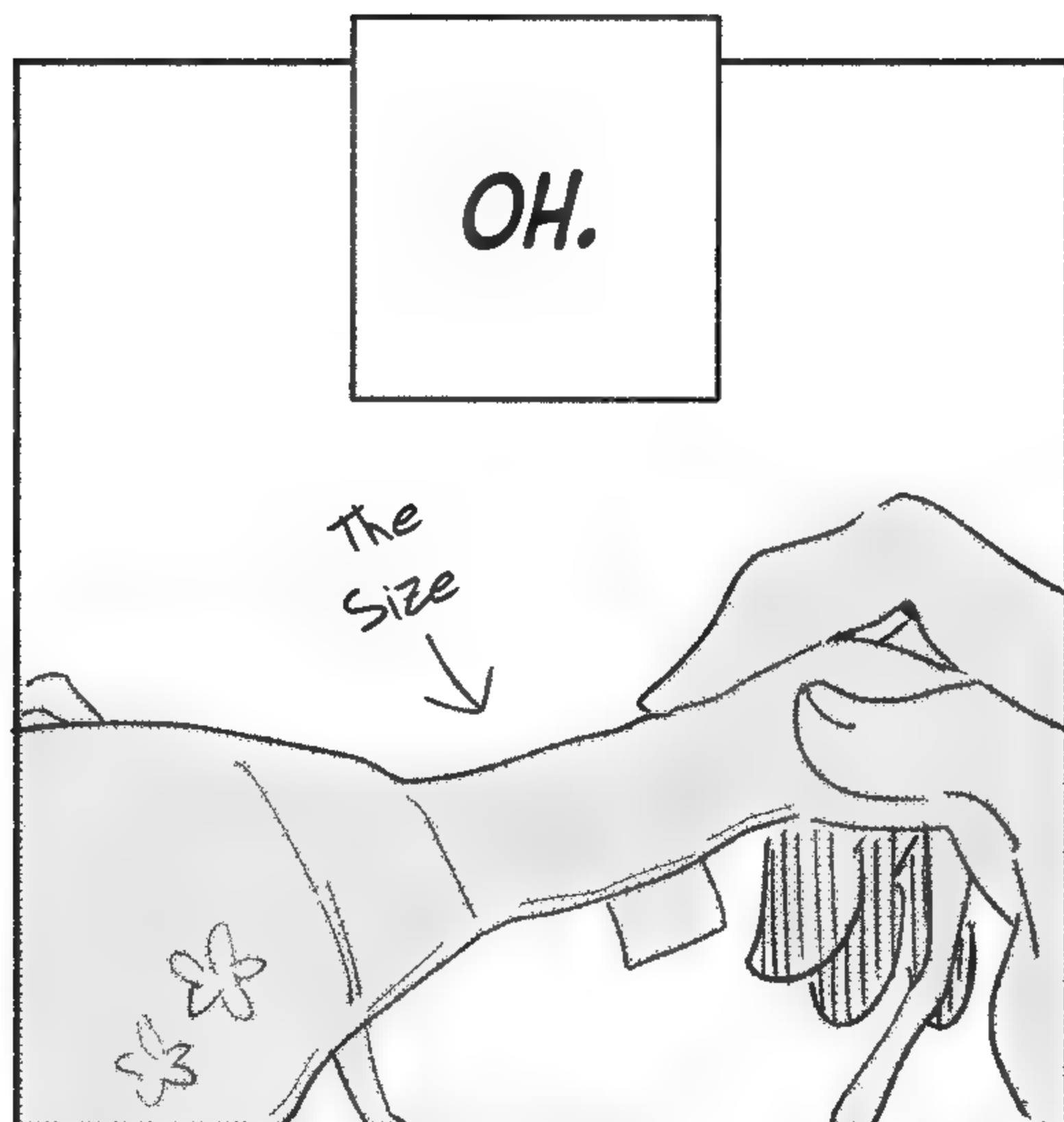


*If I Could
Reach You*

*If I Could
Reach You*

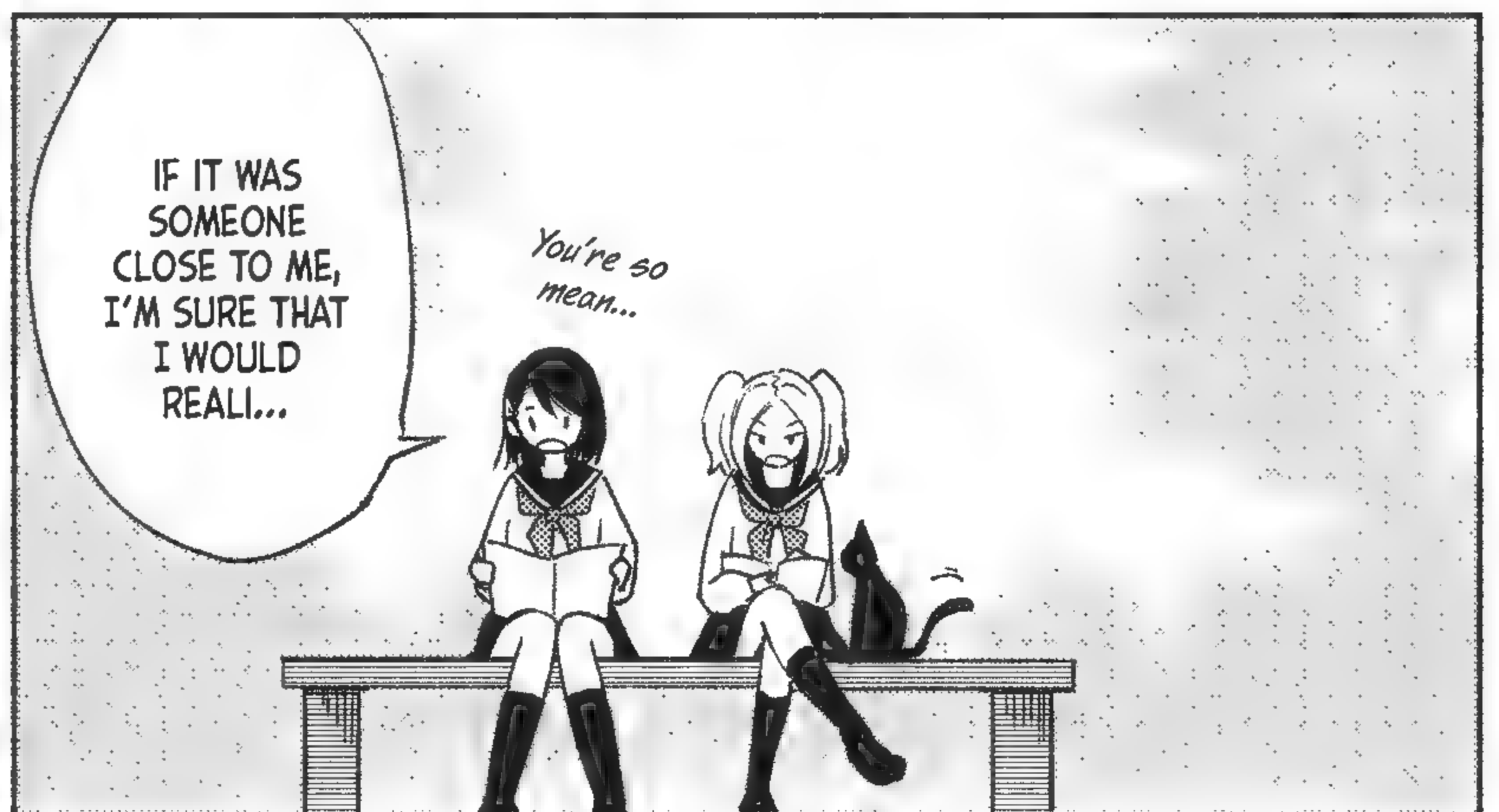
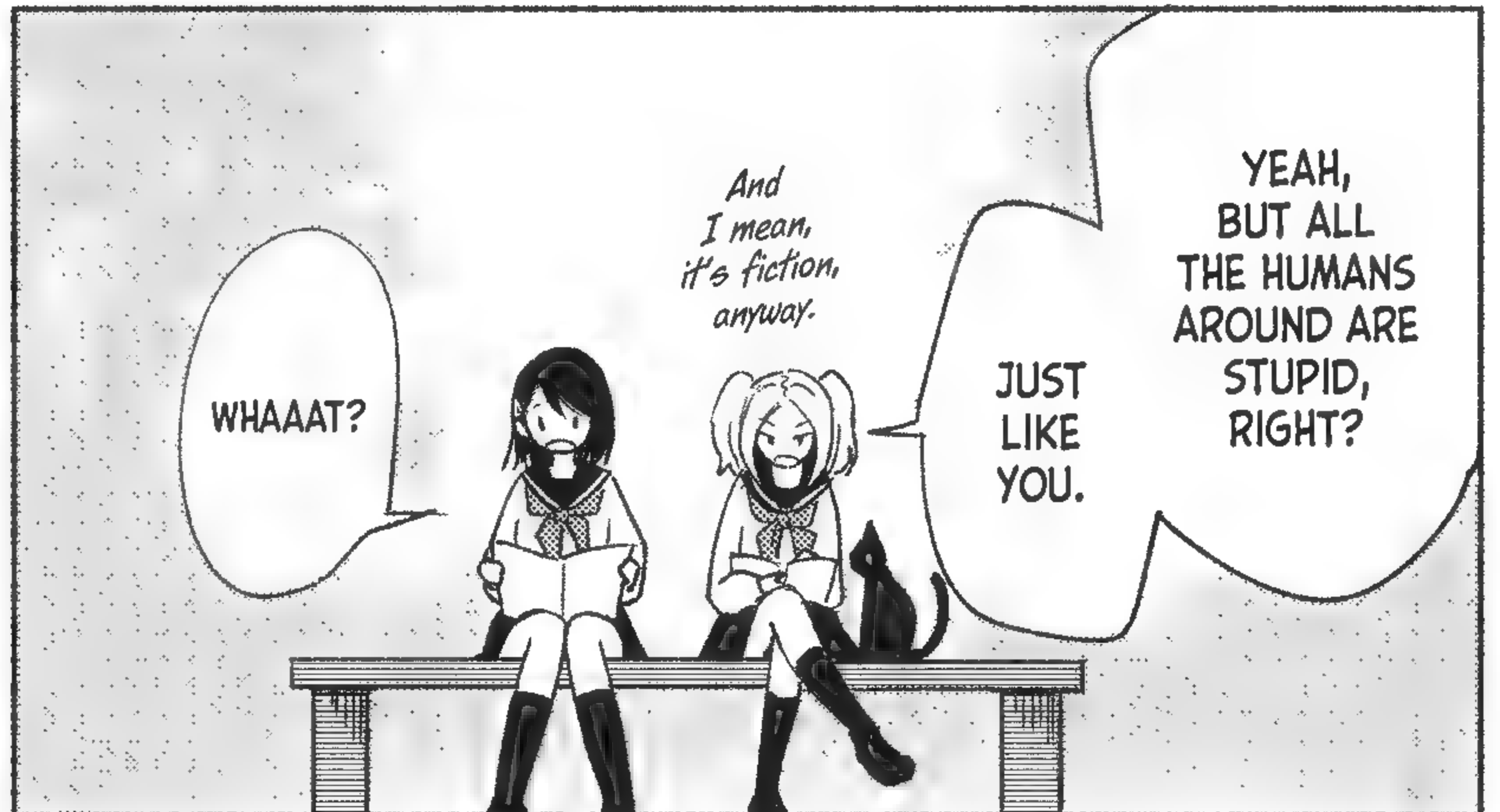
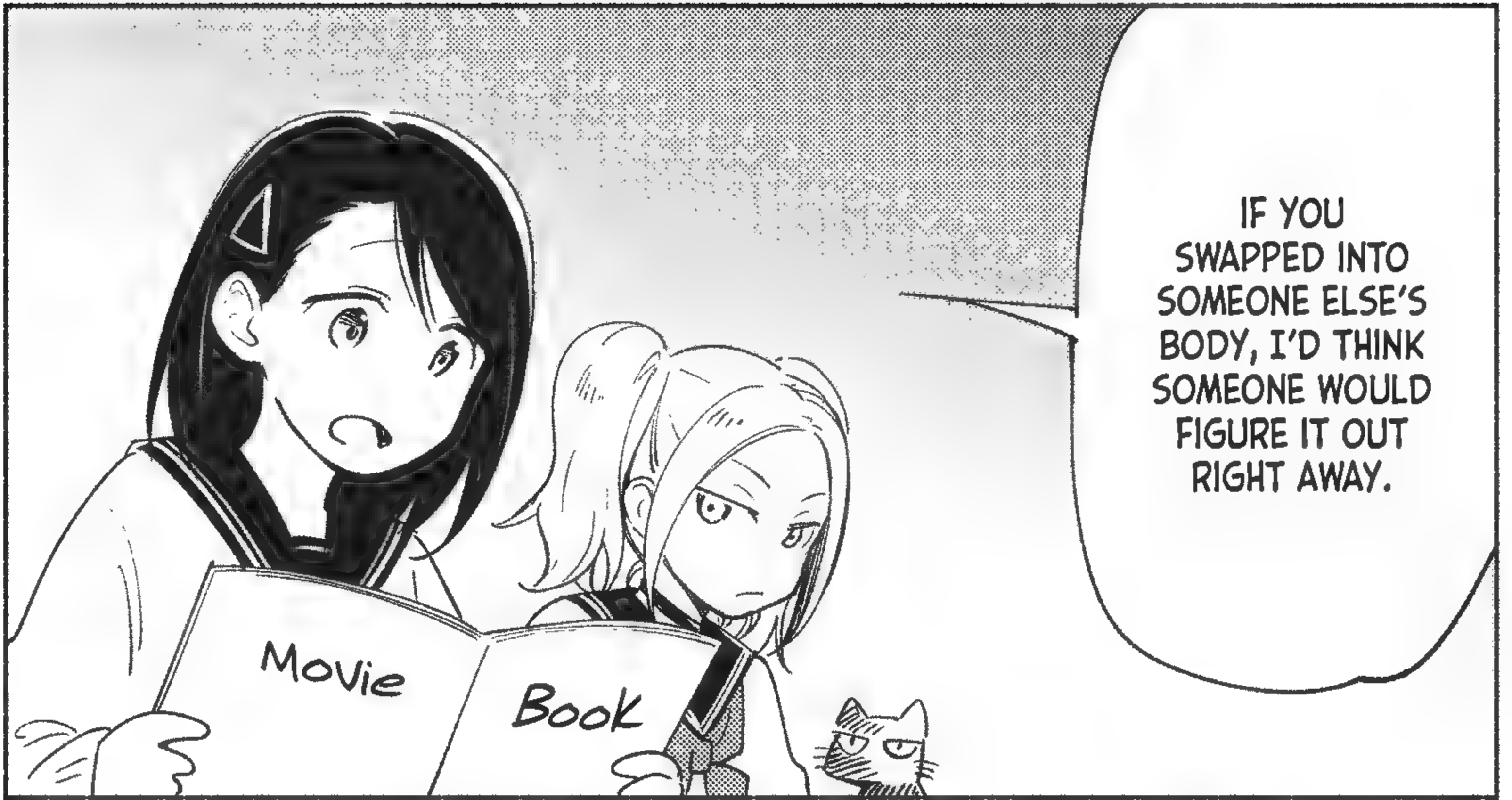
Bonus Story ①

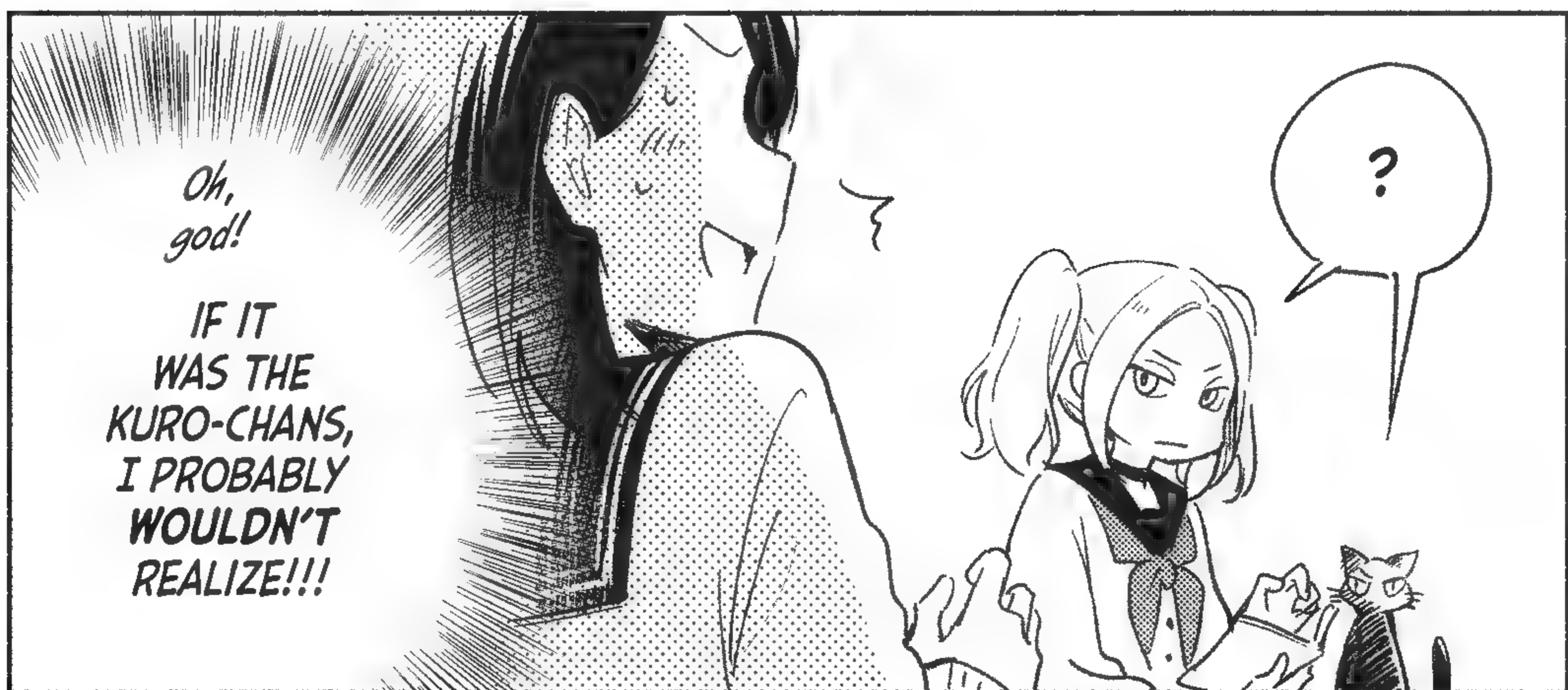
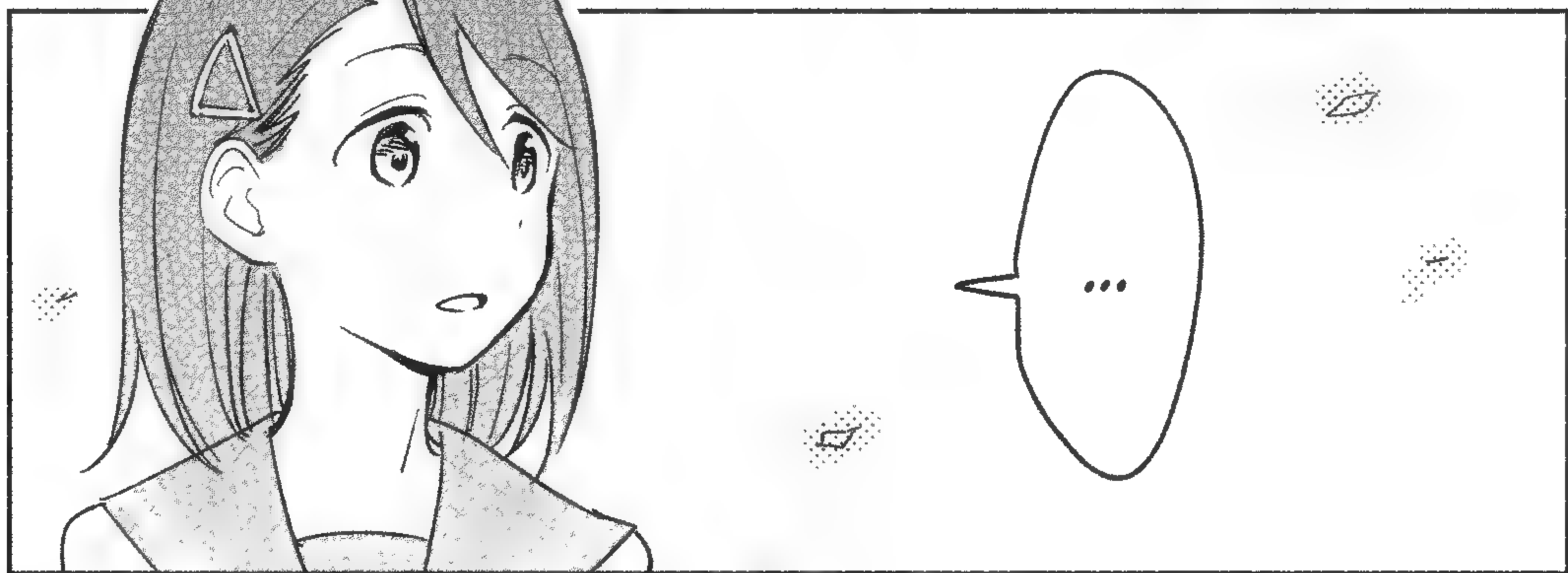




End

*ISOFLAVONE IS A COMPOUND FOUND IN SOYBEANS THOUGHT TO INCREASE ESTROGEN PRODUCTION.

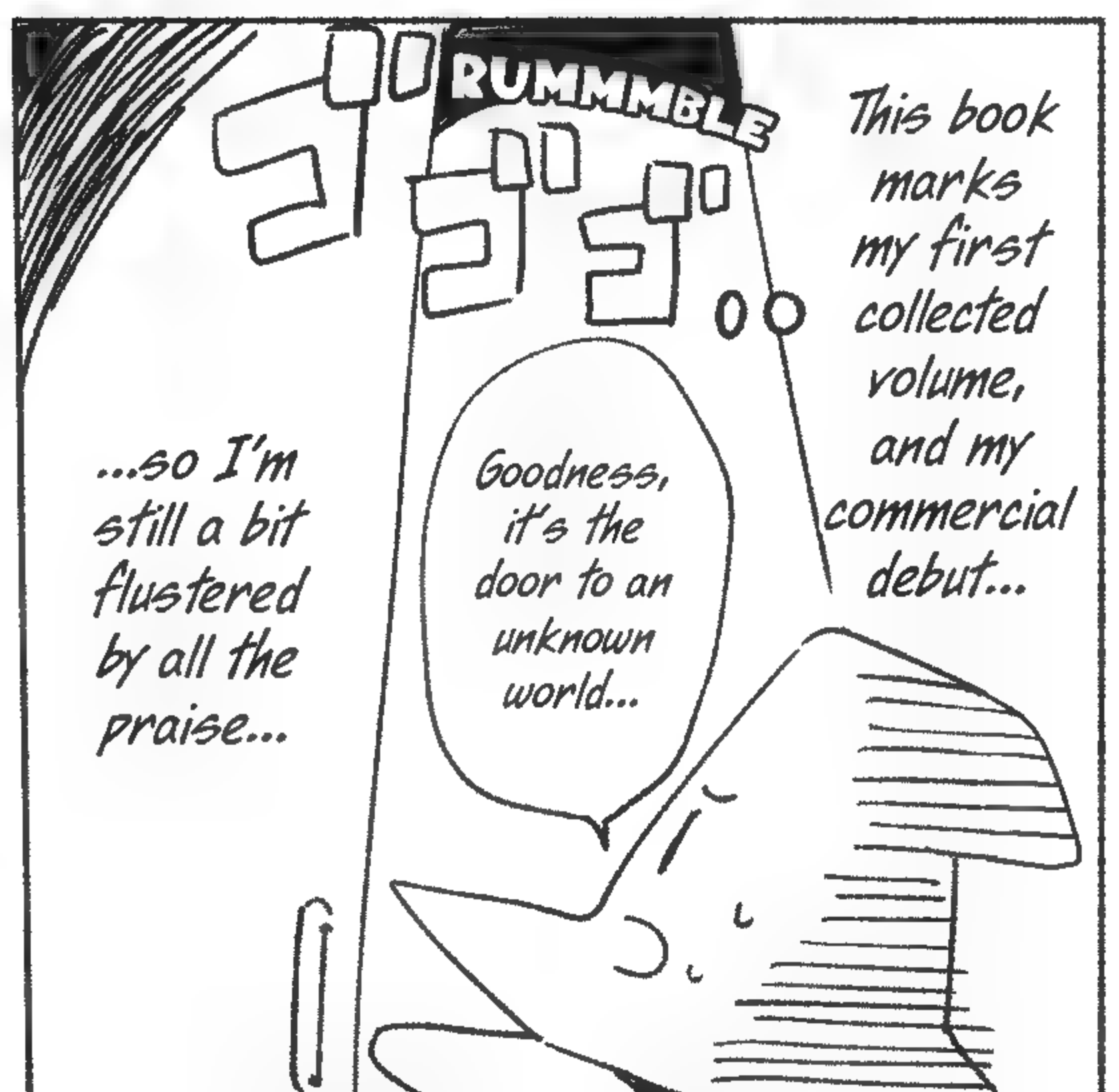
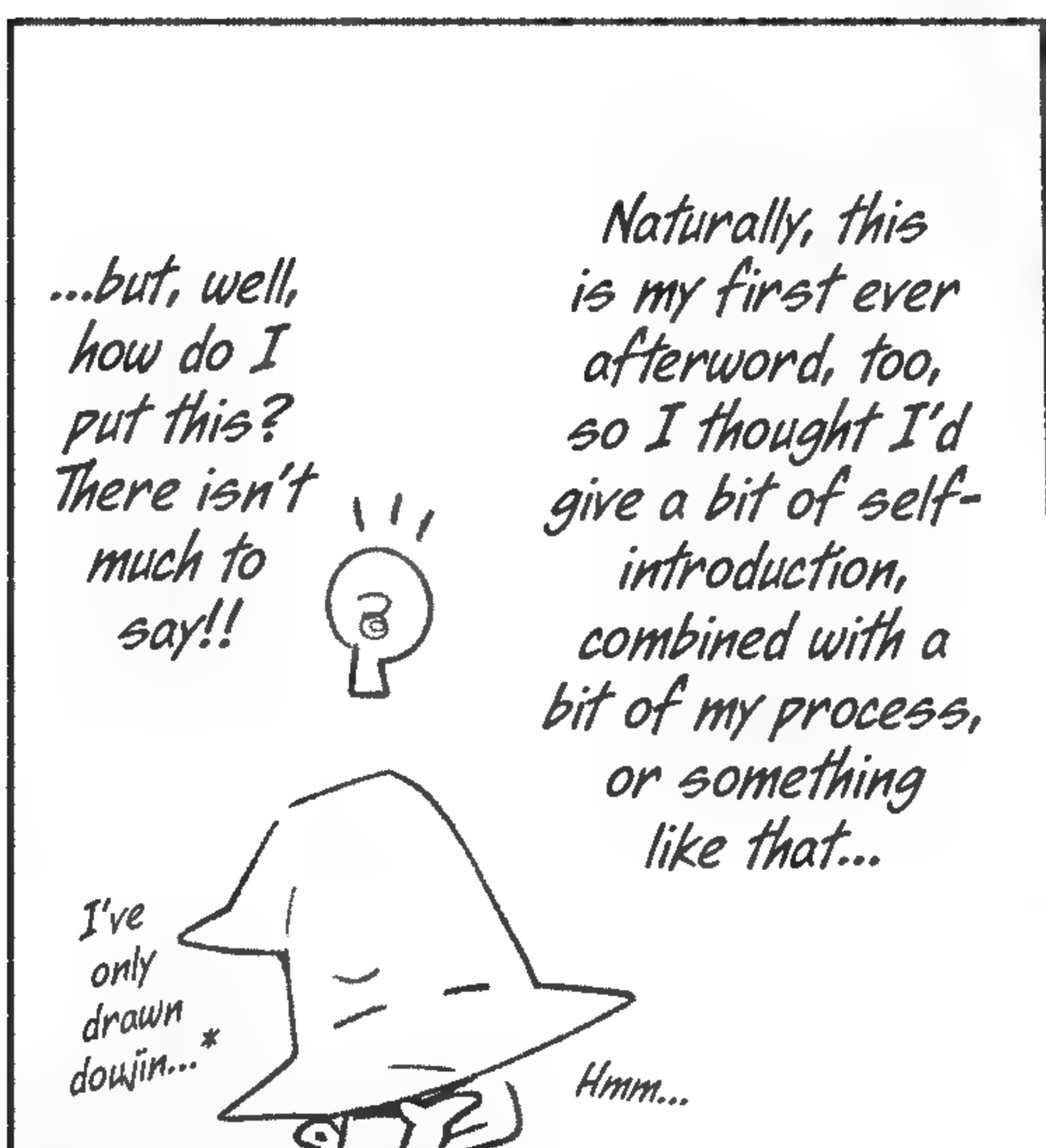
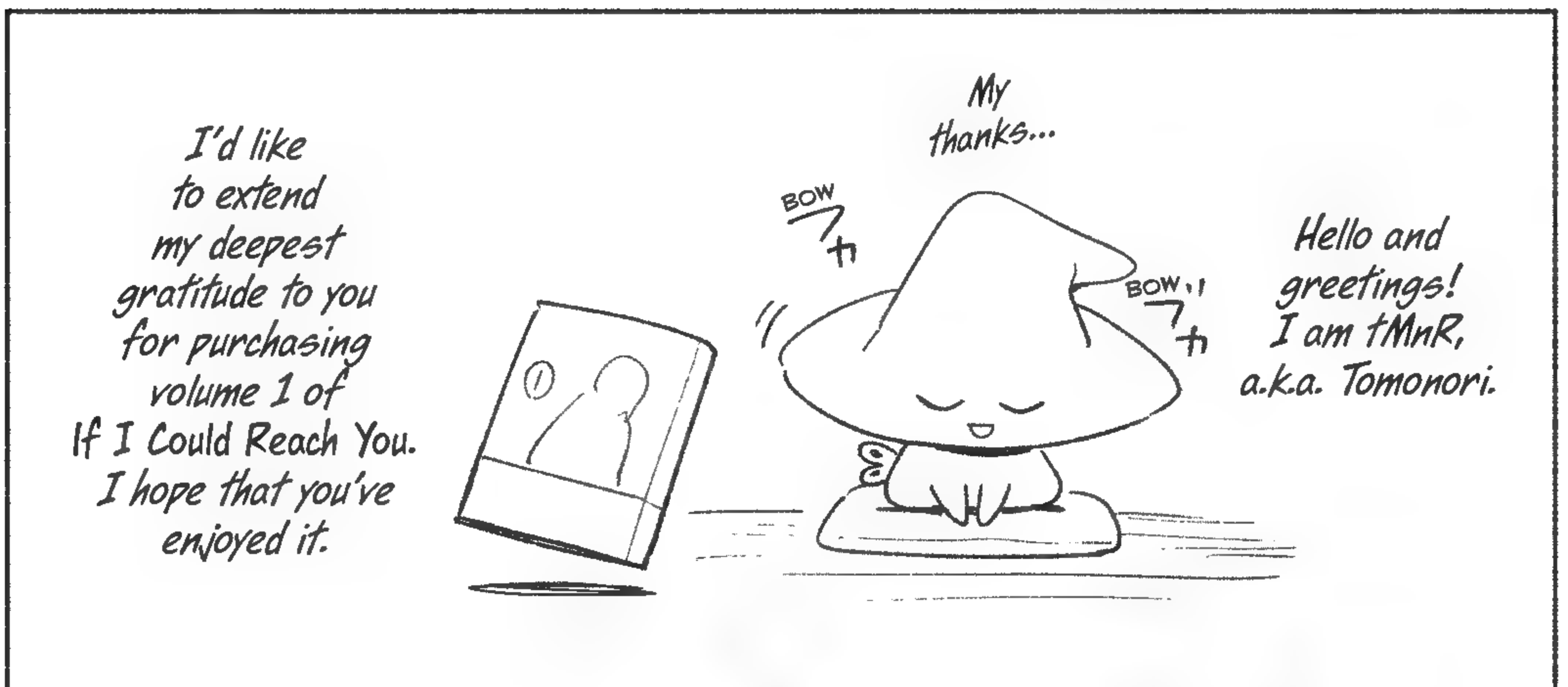




End

Afterword

by tMnR (Tomonori)



Nothing
Inside



*I've always
been a carefree
person, jumping
from one interest
to the next.*

*Ahahahaha!
Now I'll float
over there!*

*Mostly
because...
I never really
yearned to be
a mangaka.*



*I would be
so glad for
your continued
support from
here on, too!*



*Before the
Deadline*



*It was
hard, but
I'm glad I
tried it...
It was
stressful,
but fun.*

*...So, well,
imagine turning
a lax author like that
into a serious one—
now that's some-
thing I hope
I "Could Reach."*

Special Thanks

*Editor Saito-san
Designer-san
Everyone Else Involved
and my Dearest Readers*

If I Could Reach You 1

KODANSHA COMICS Digital Edition

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PEOPLE CHANGE.
SO DO FEELINGS.

You start
taking ballet or
something?



← AT THE AGE
WHERE SHE
WANTS TO BE
TALLER.

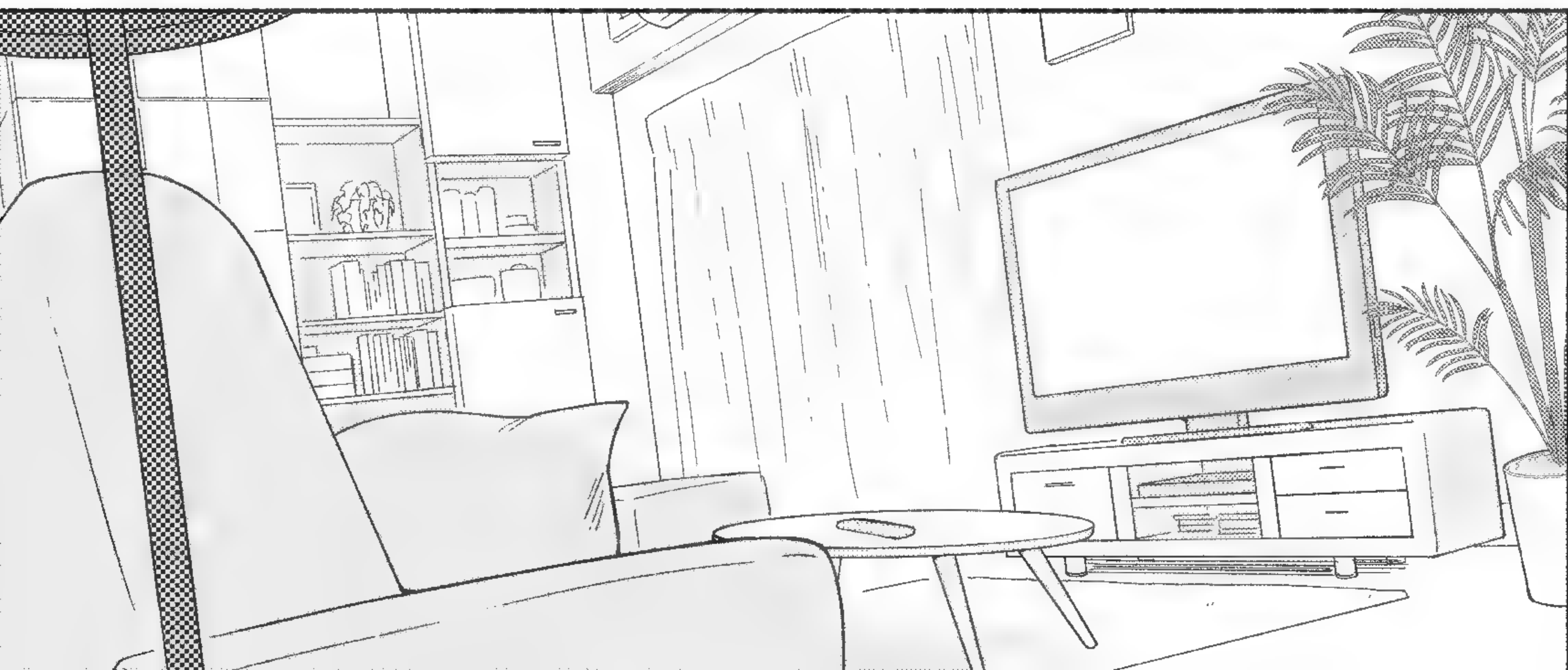
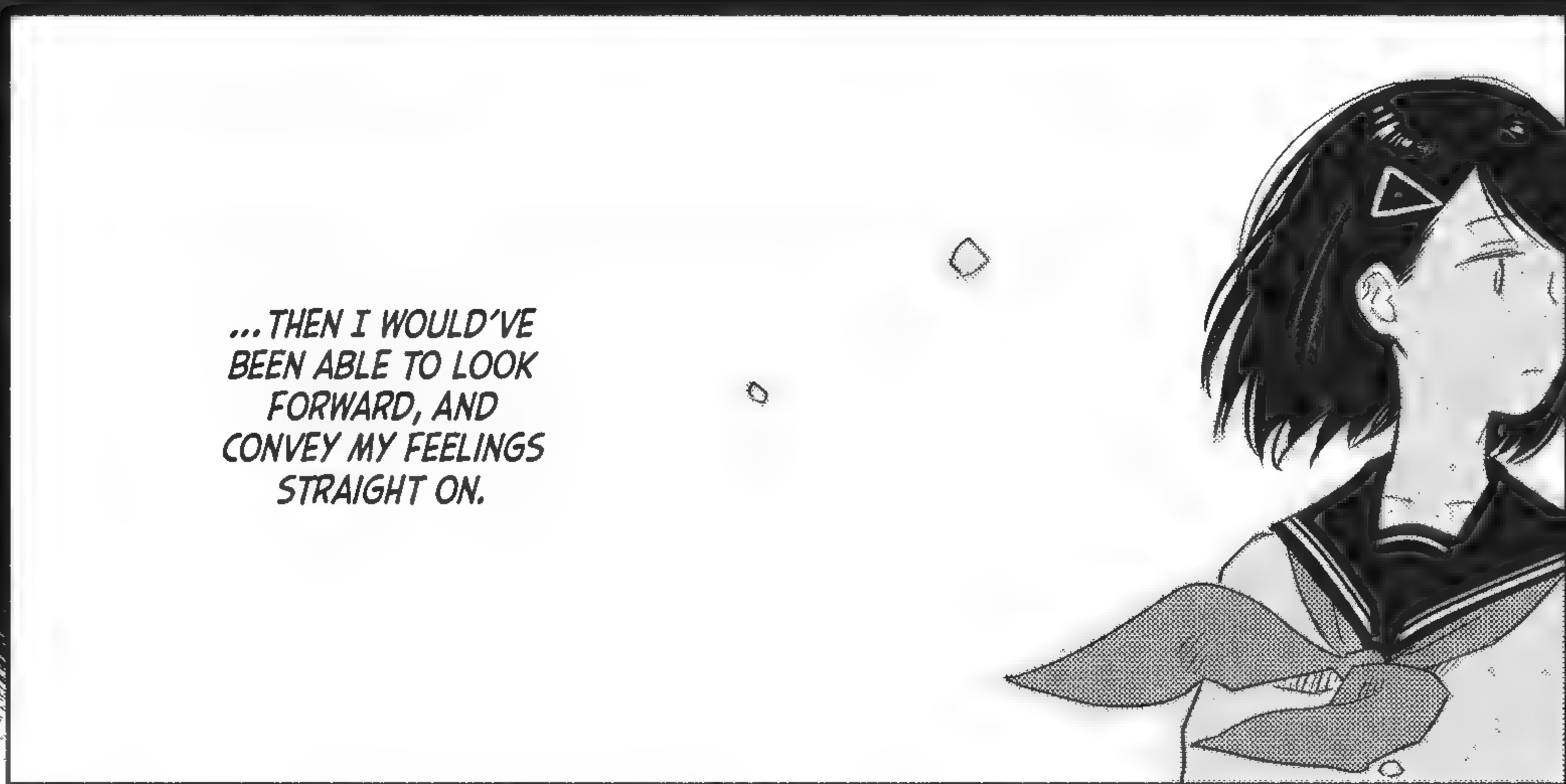
THOUGH,
IF YOU TRY
TO FORCE
CHANGE...

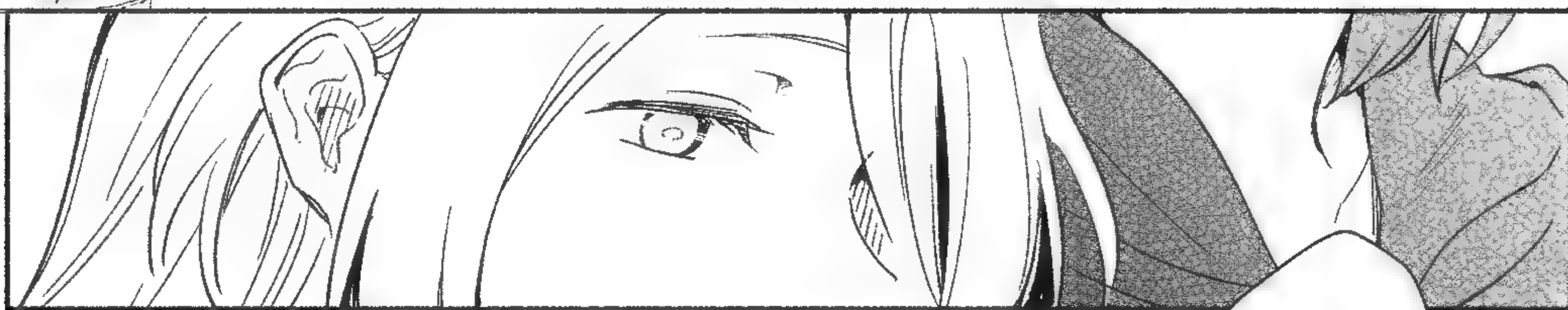
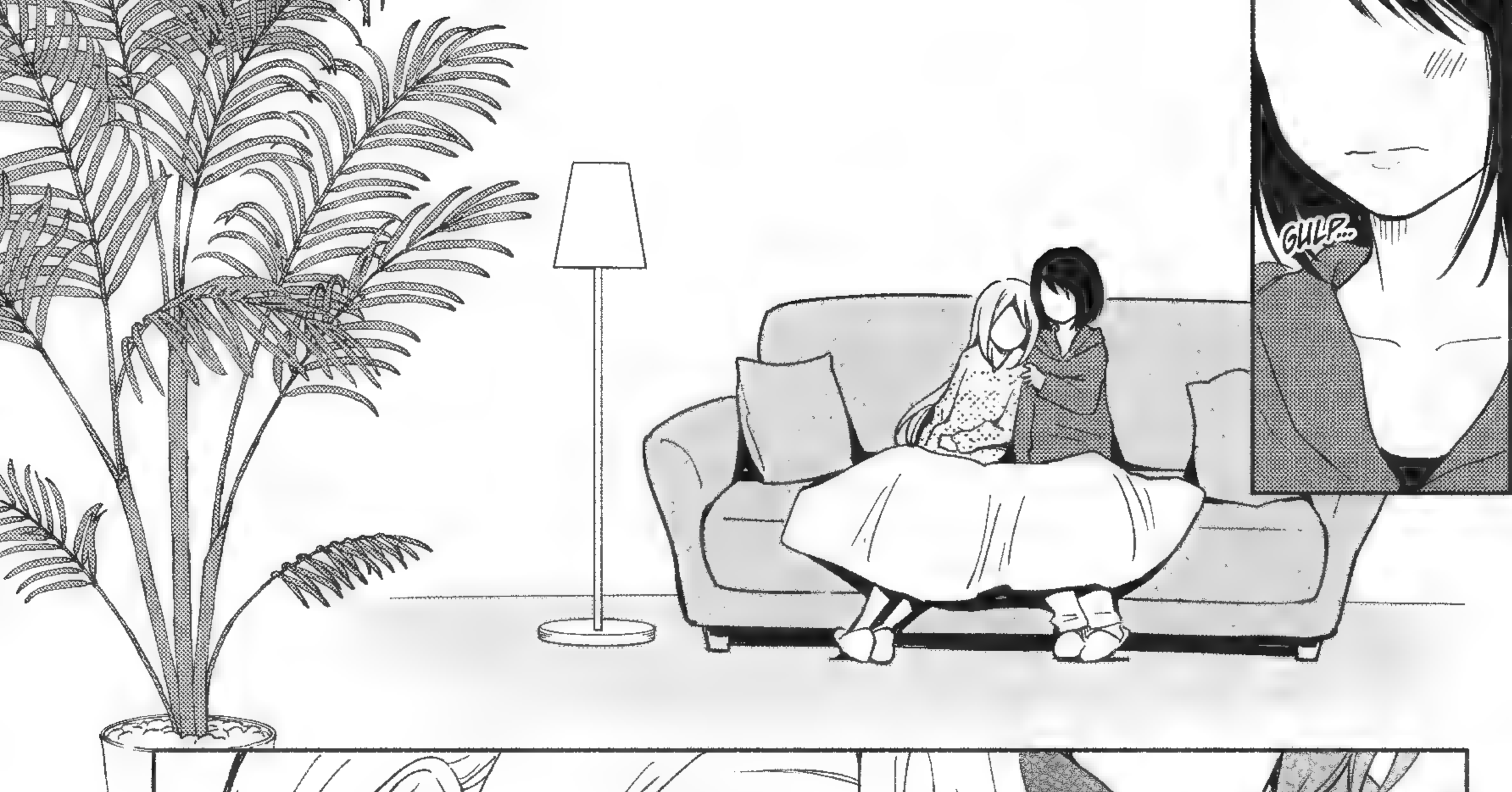
...IT
NEVER
COMES
EASILY.

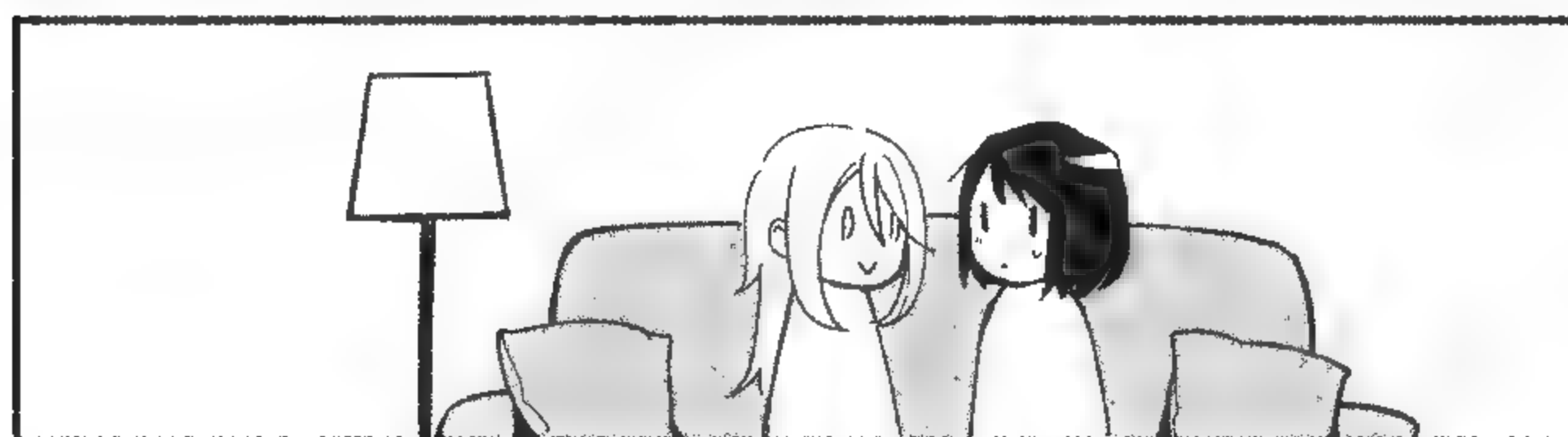
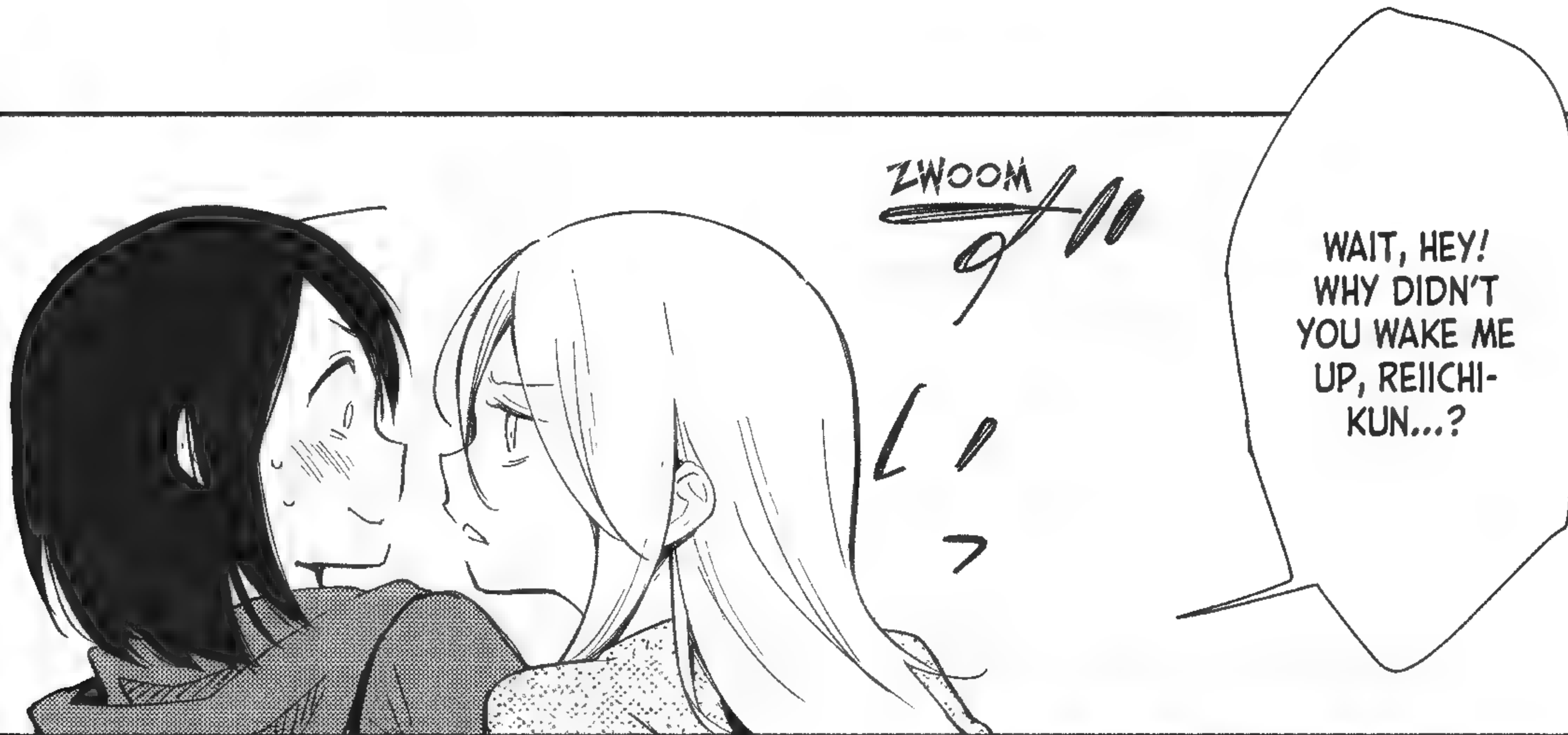
AND
BY THE
TIME WE'VE
CHANGED, IT'S
COME TOO
SOON.

You've
gotten
so big!

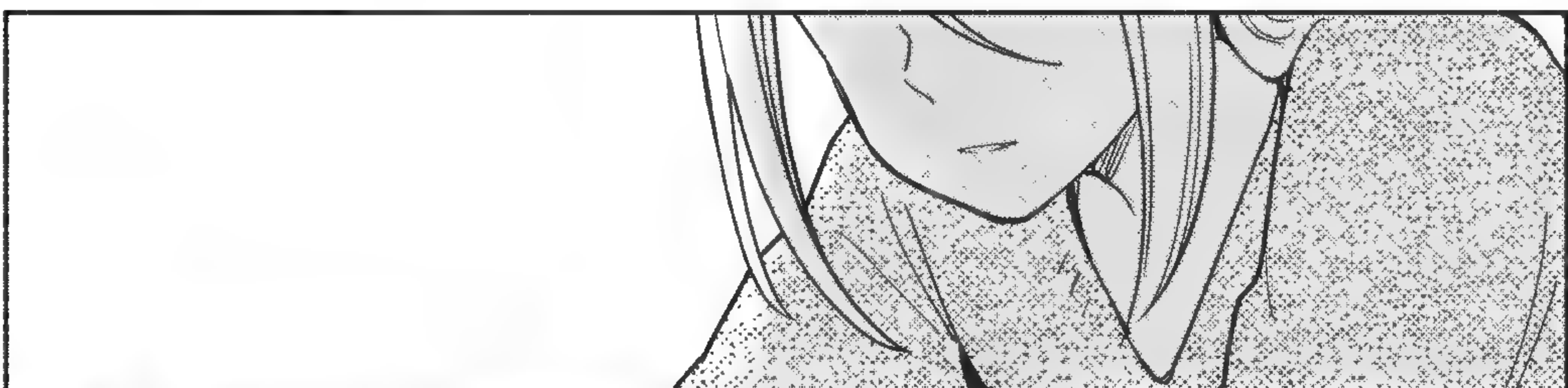
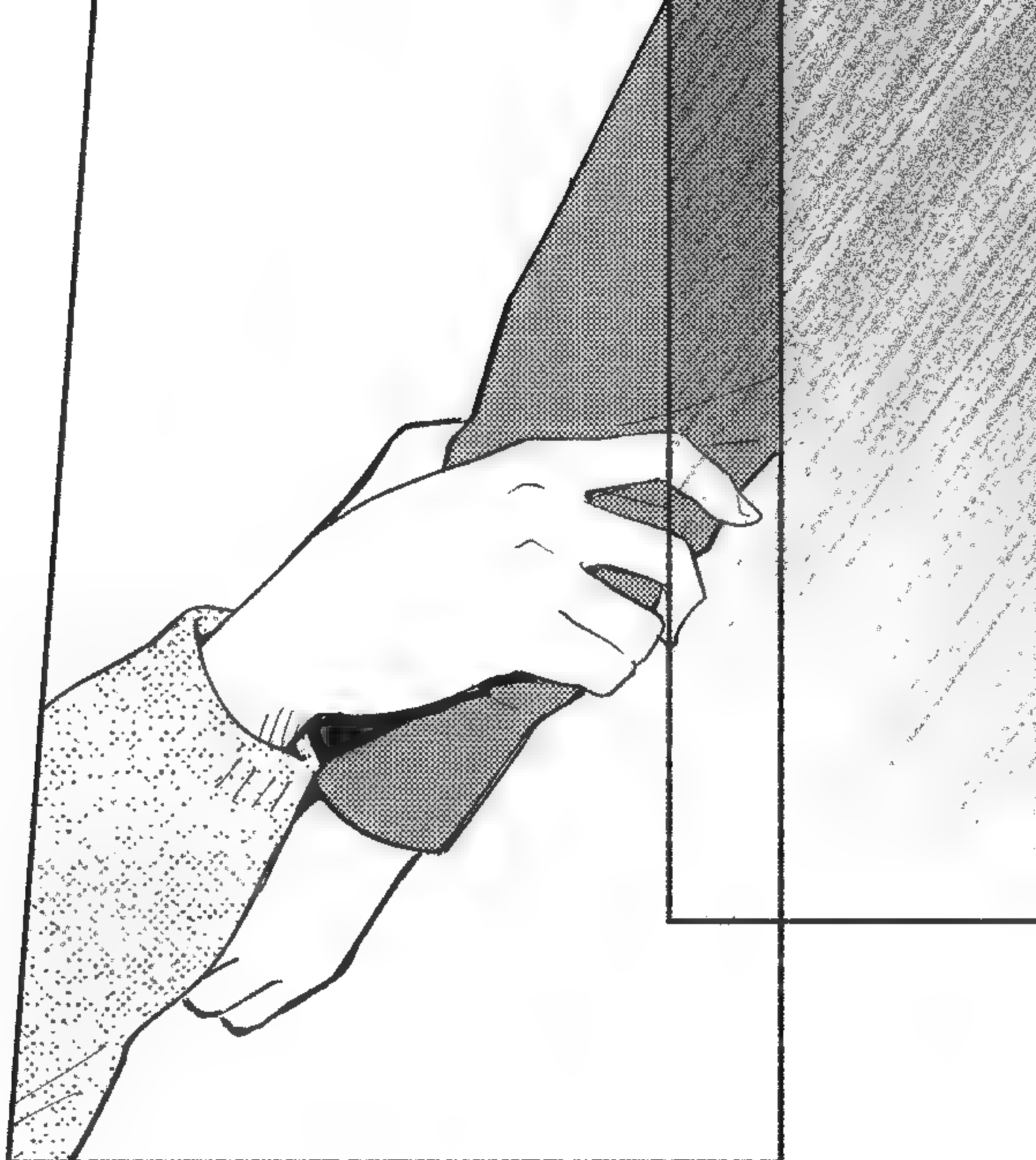


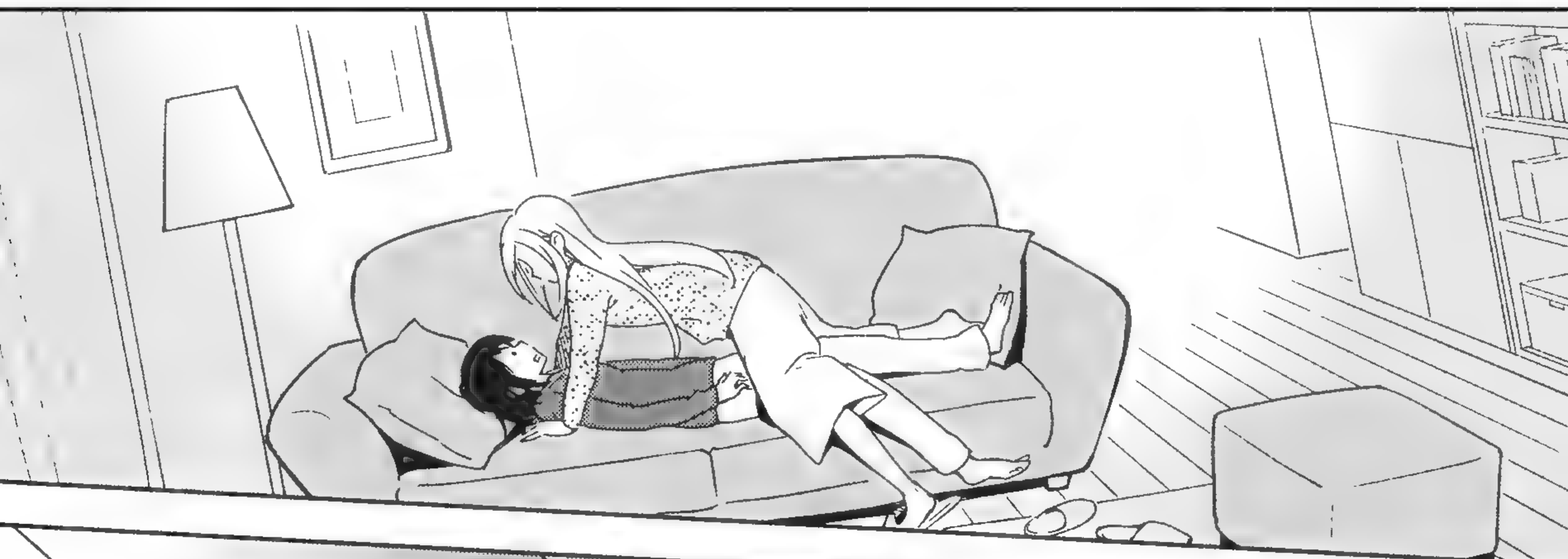






「アツク」





...HM?!



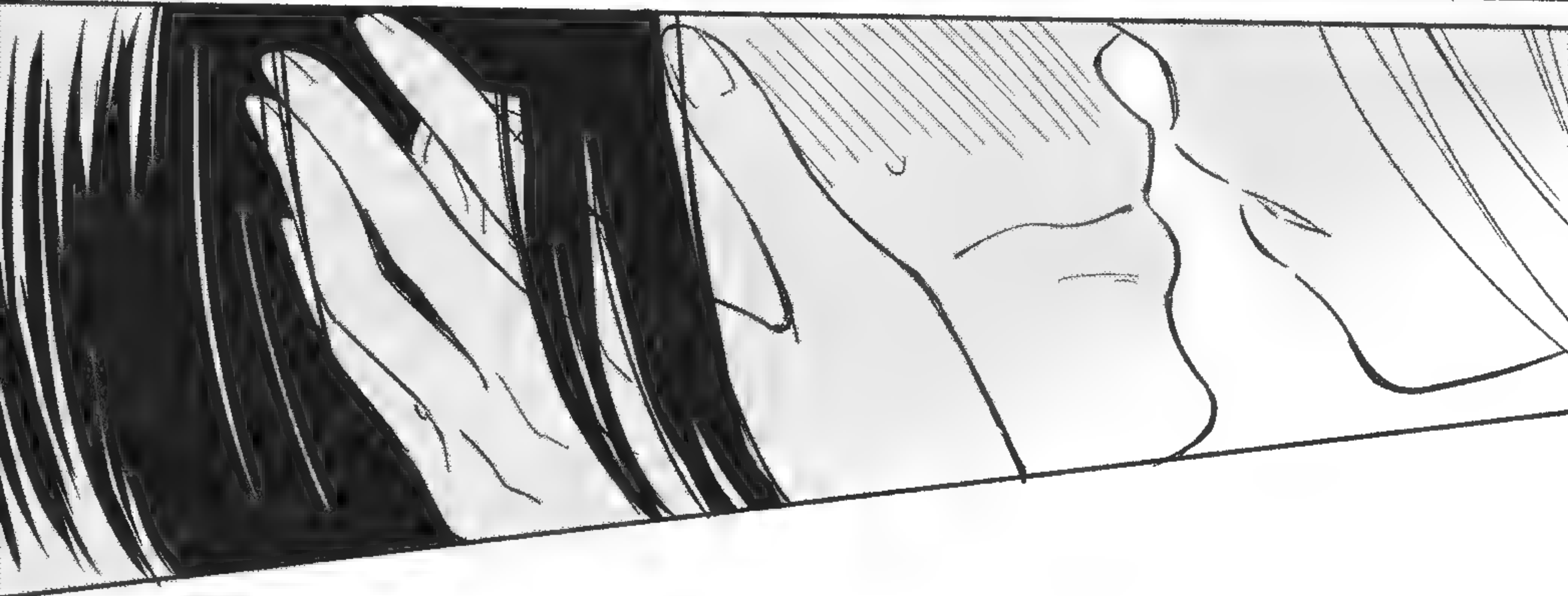
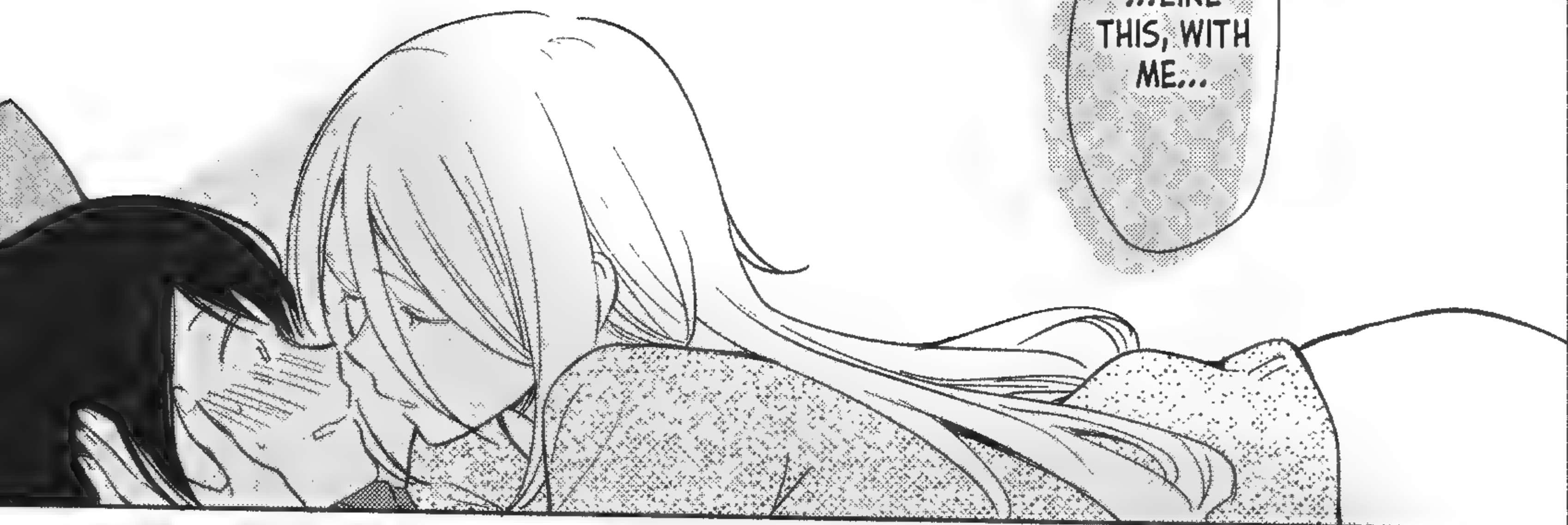


YOU
WANT
TO,
DON'T
YOU?

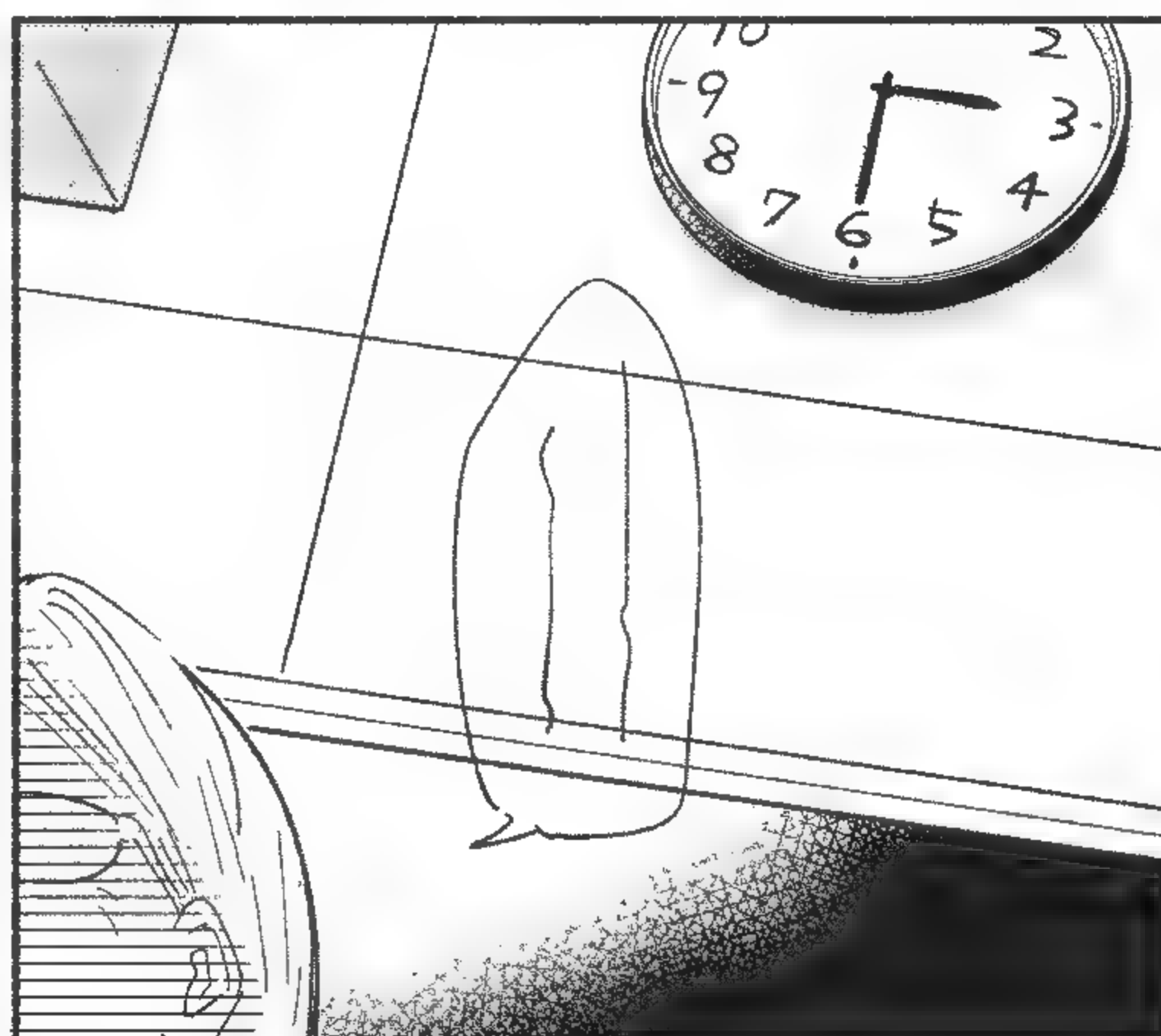
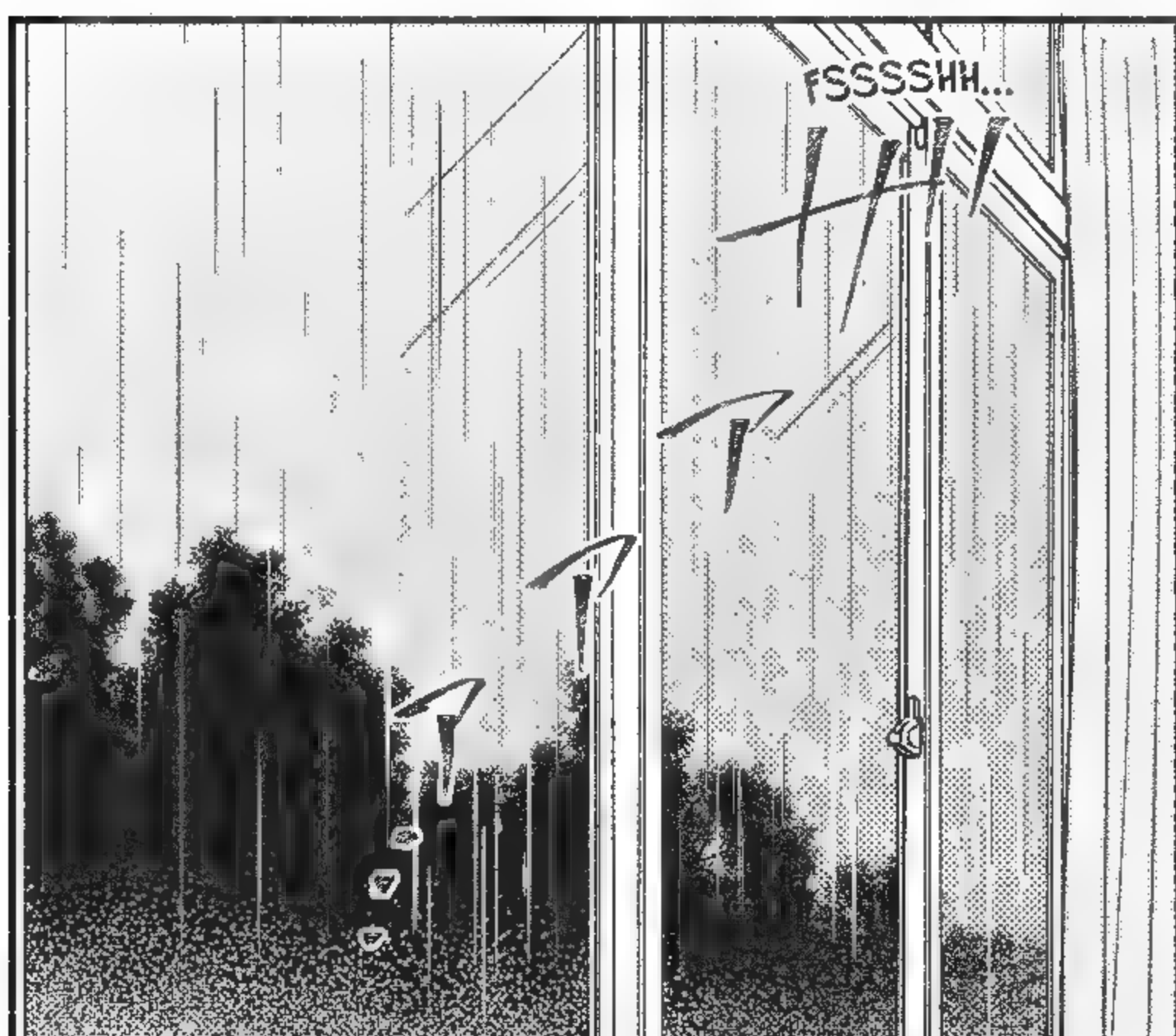
TO DO
THINGS...

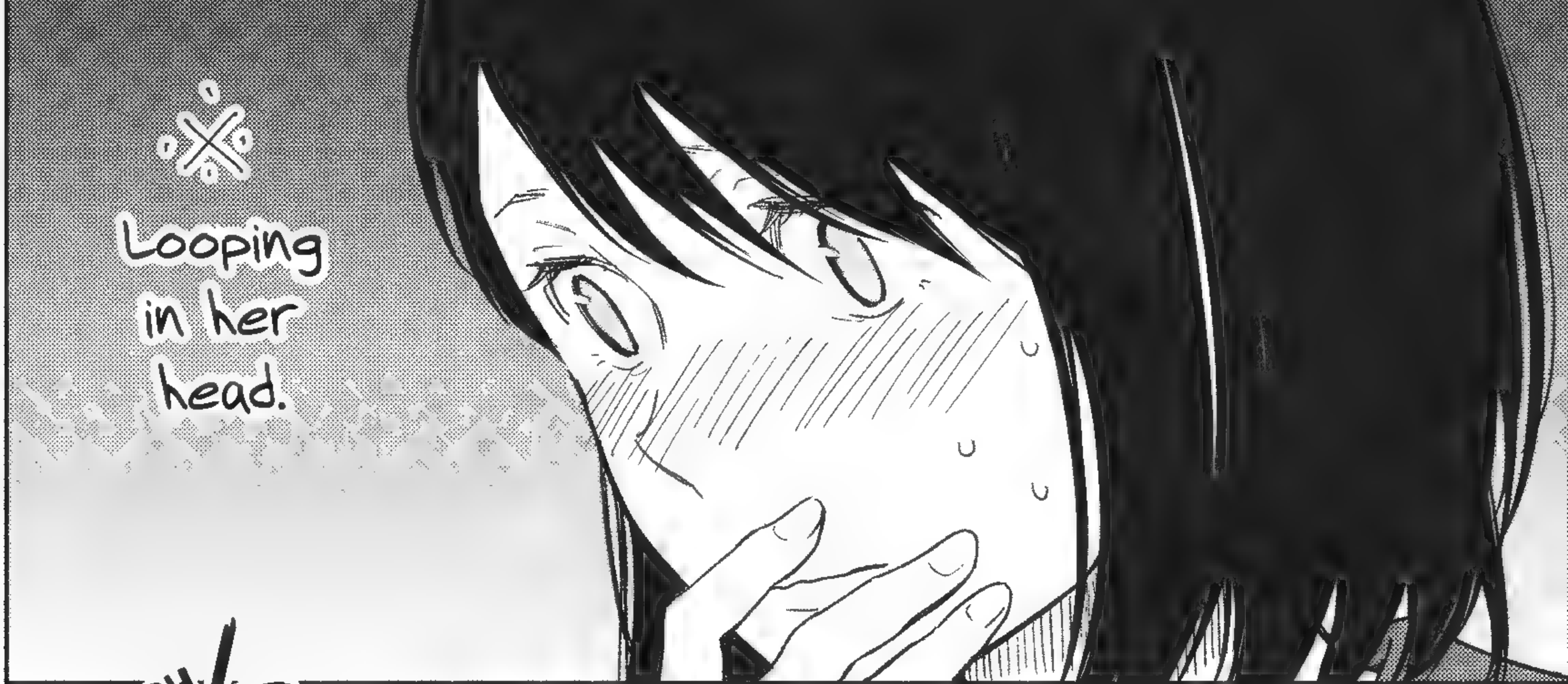


...LIKE
THIS, WITH
ME...

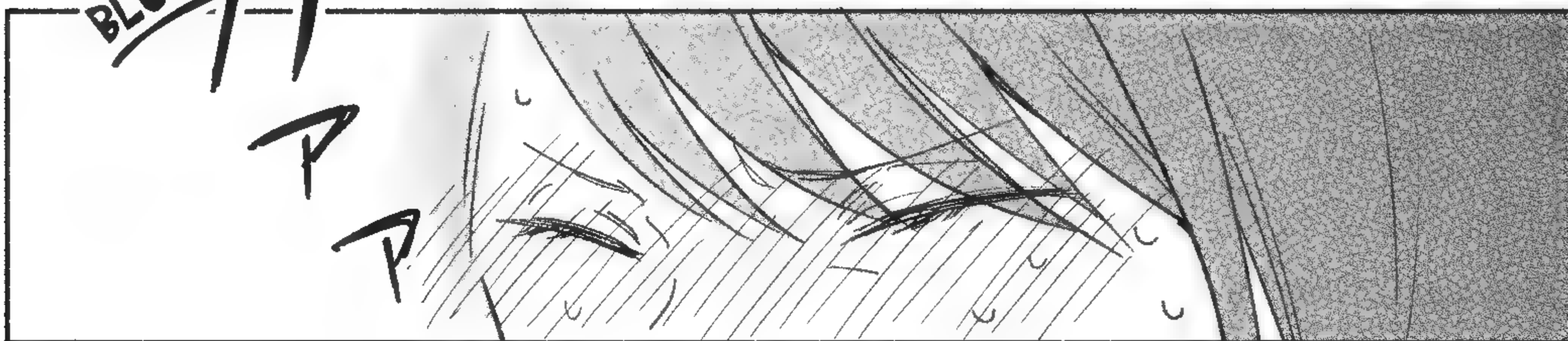








Looping
in her
head.



~~BLUSH~~

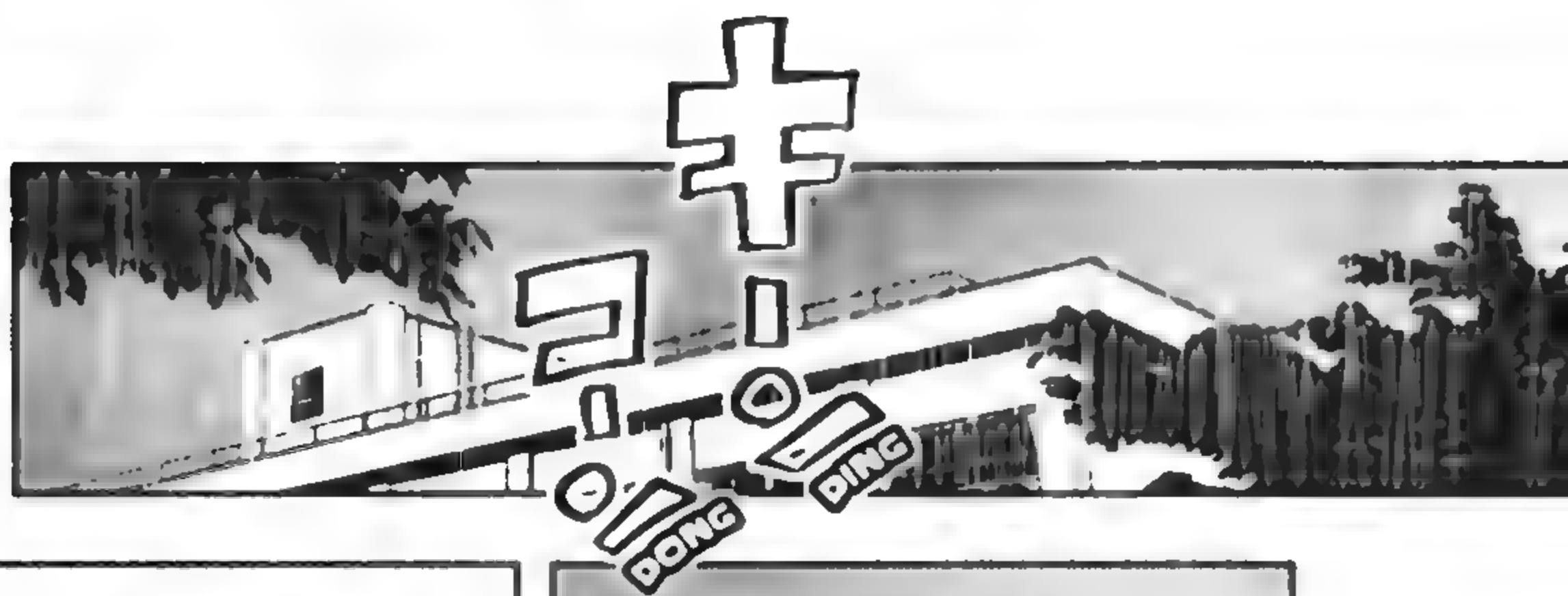
A

A

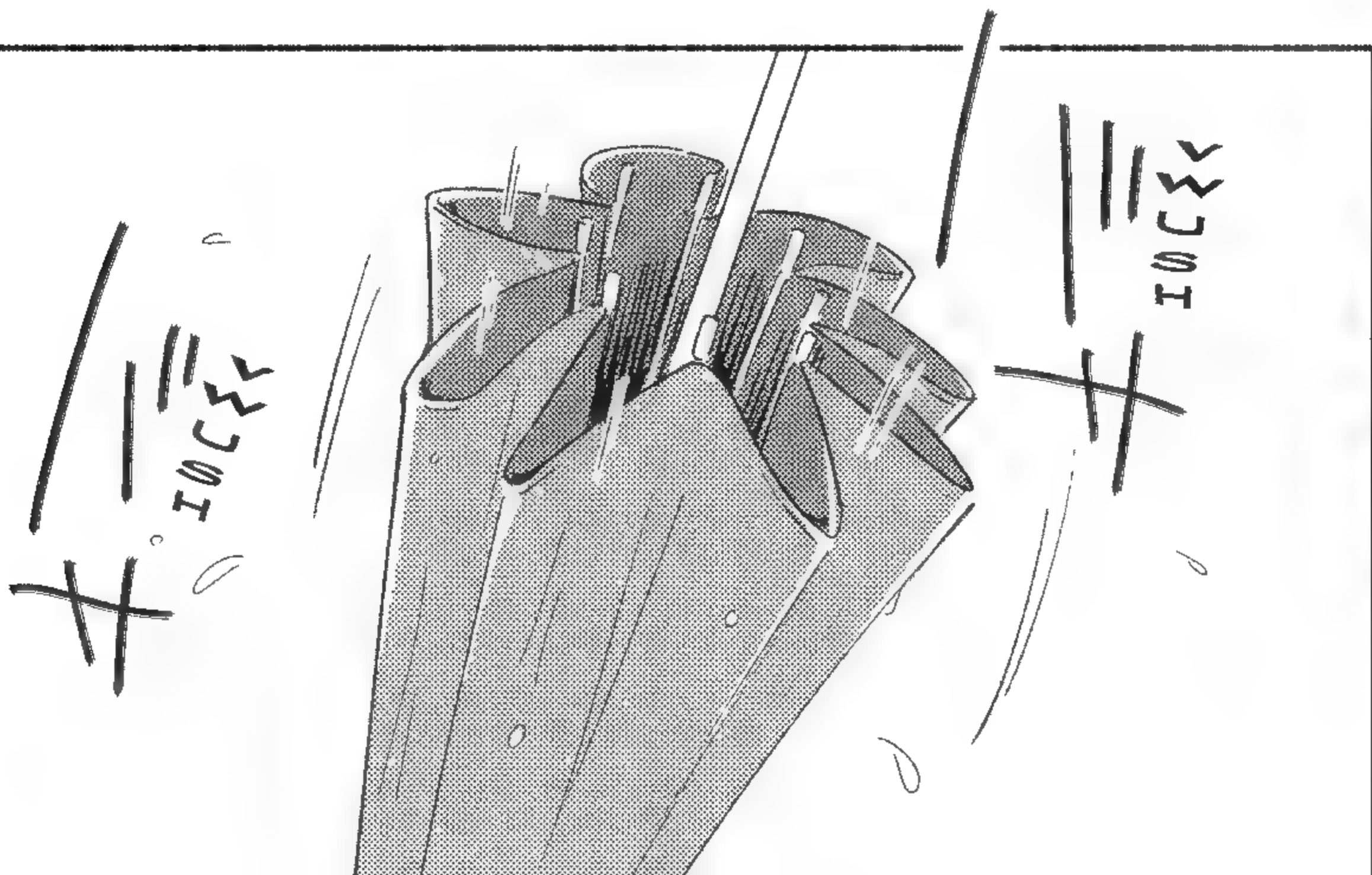


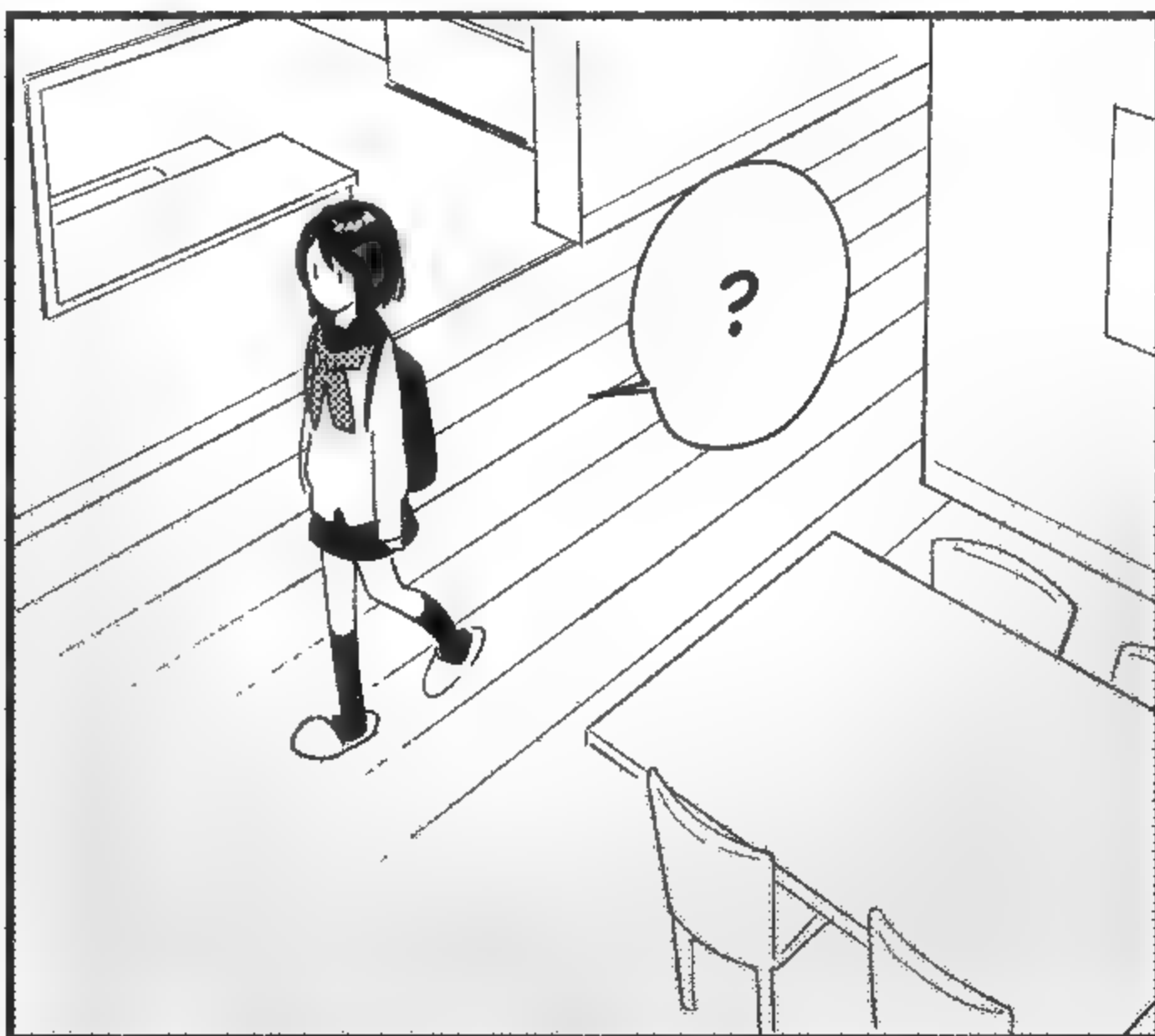
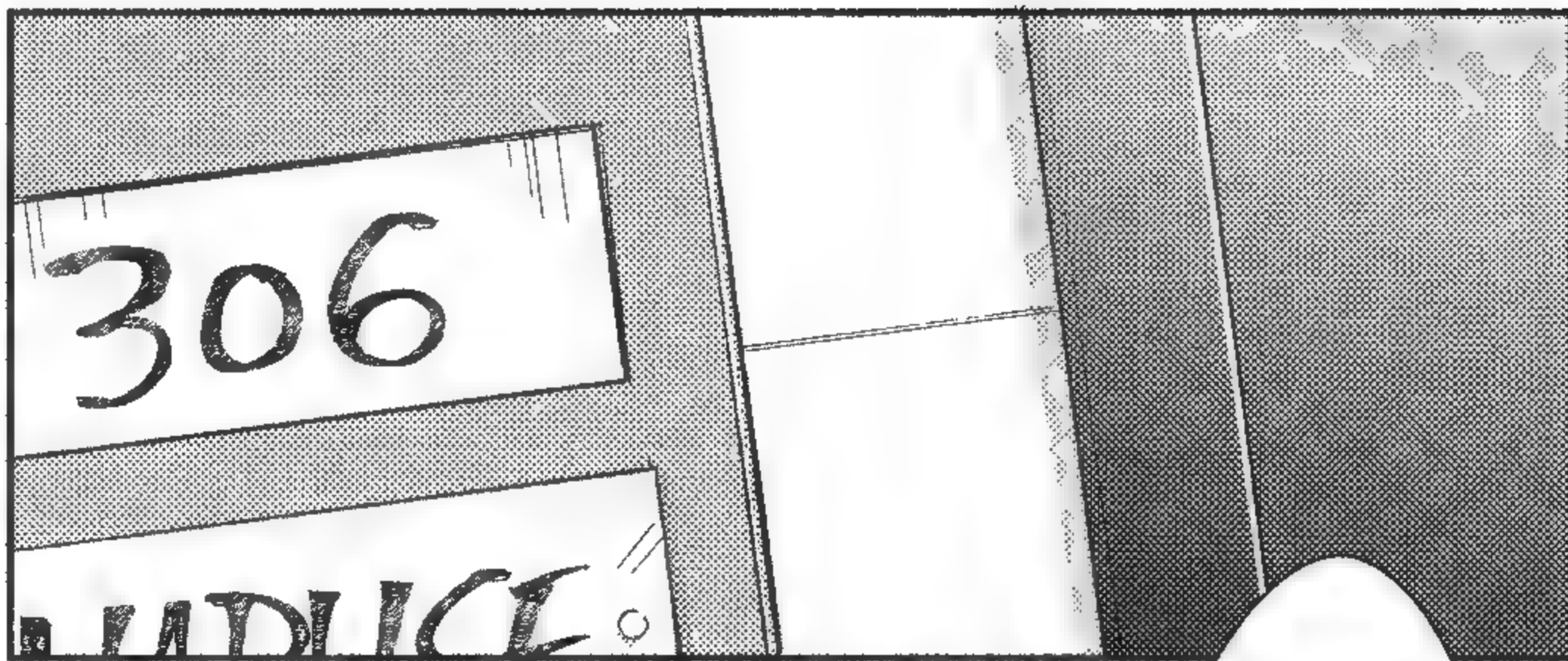
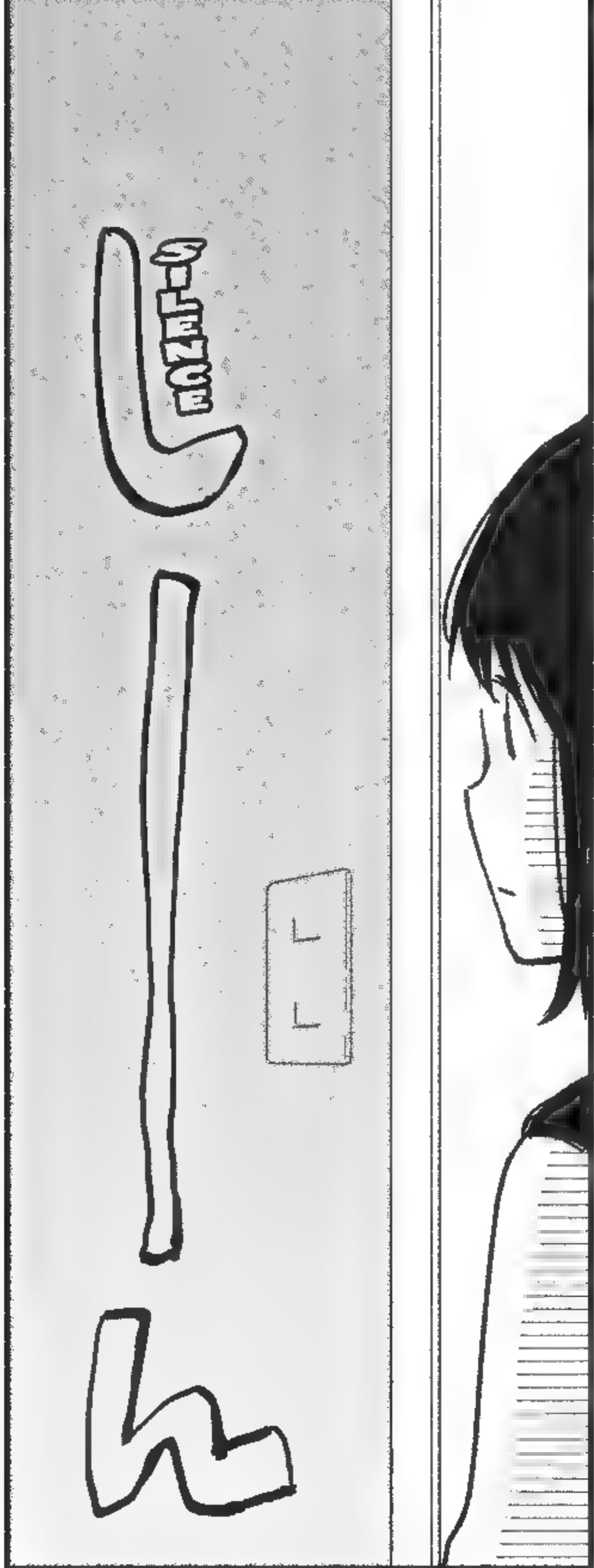
Here's the
handout...

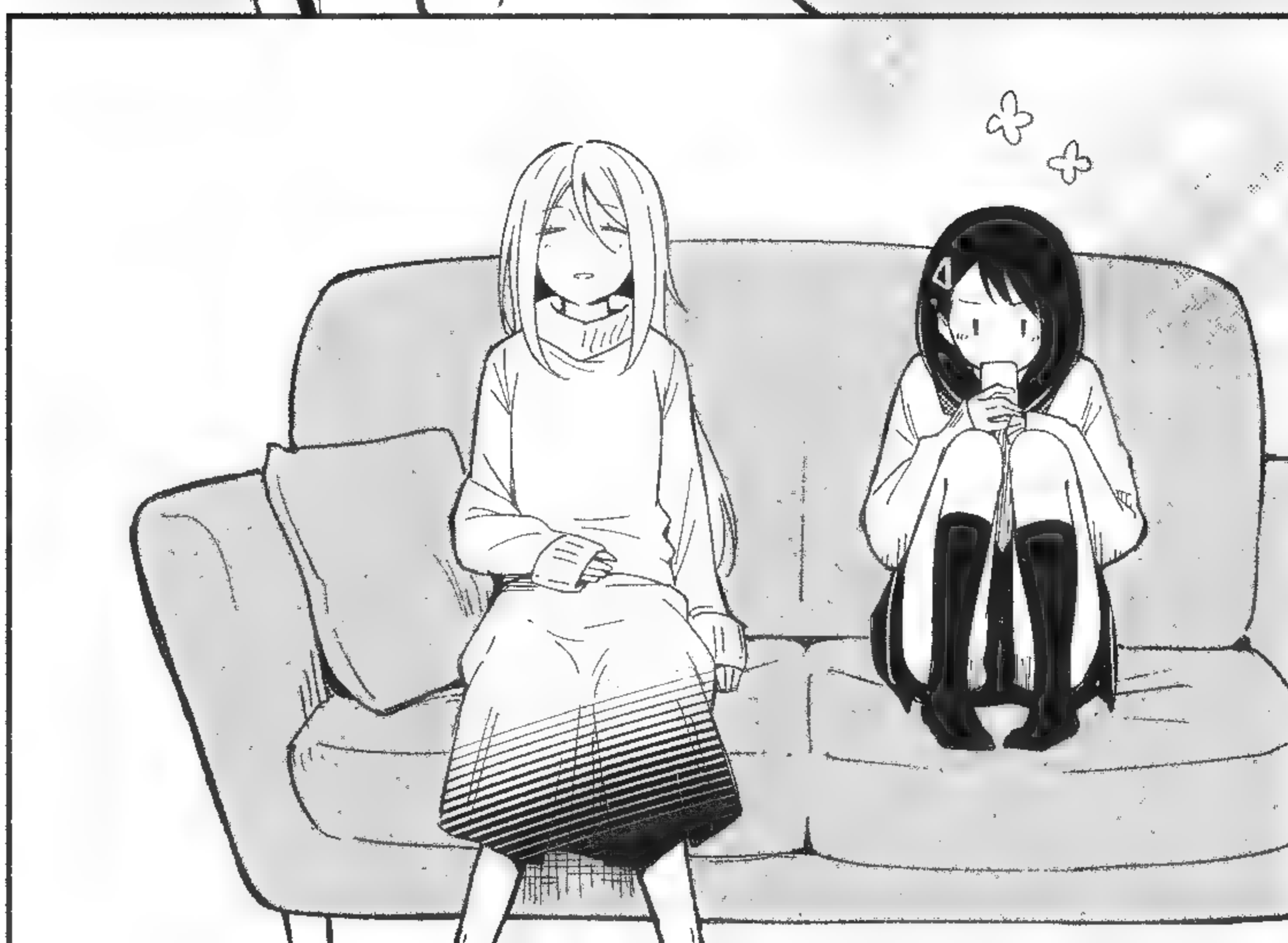
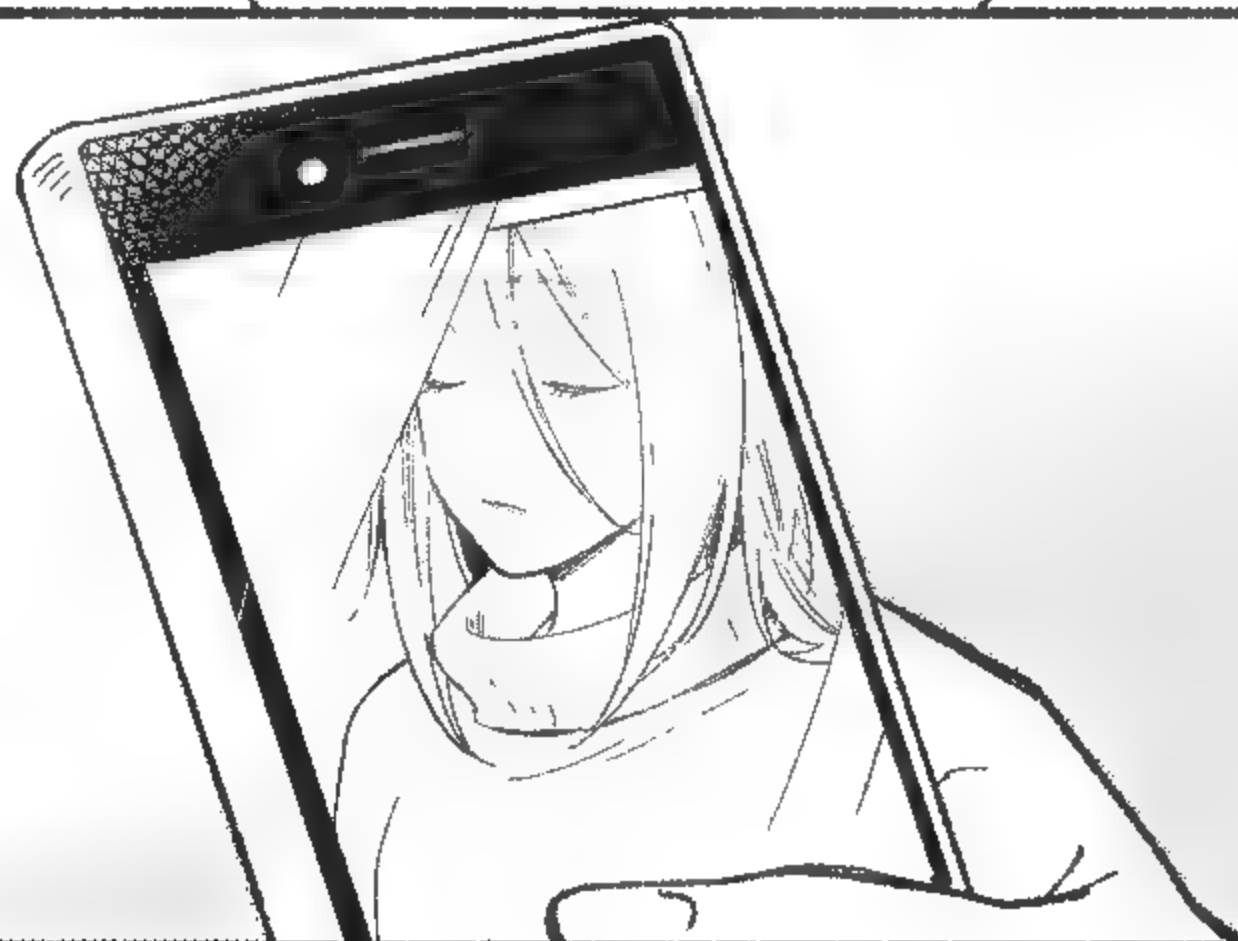
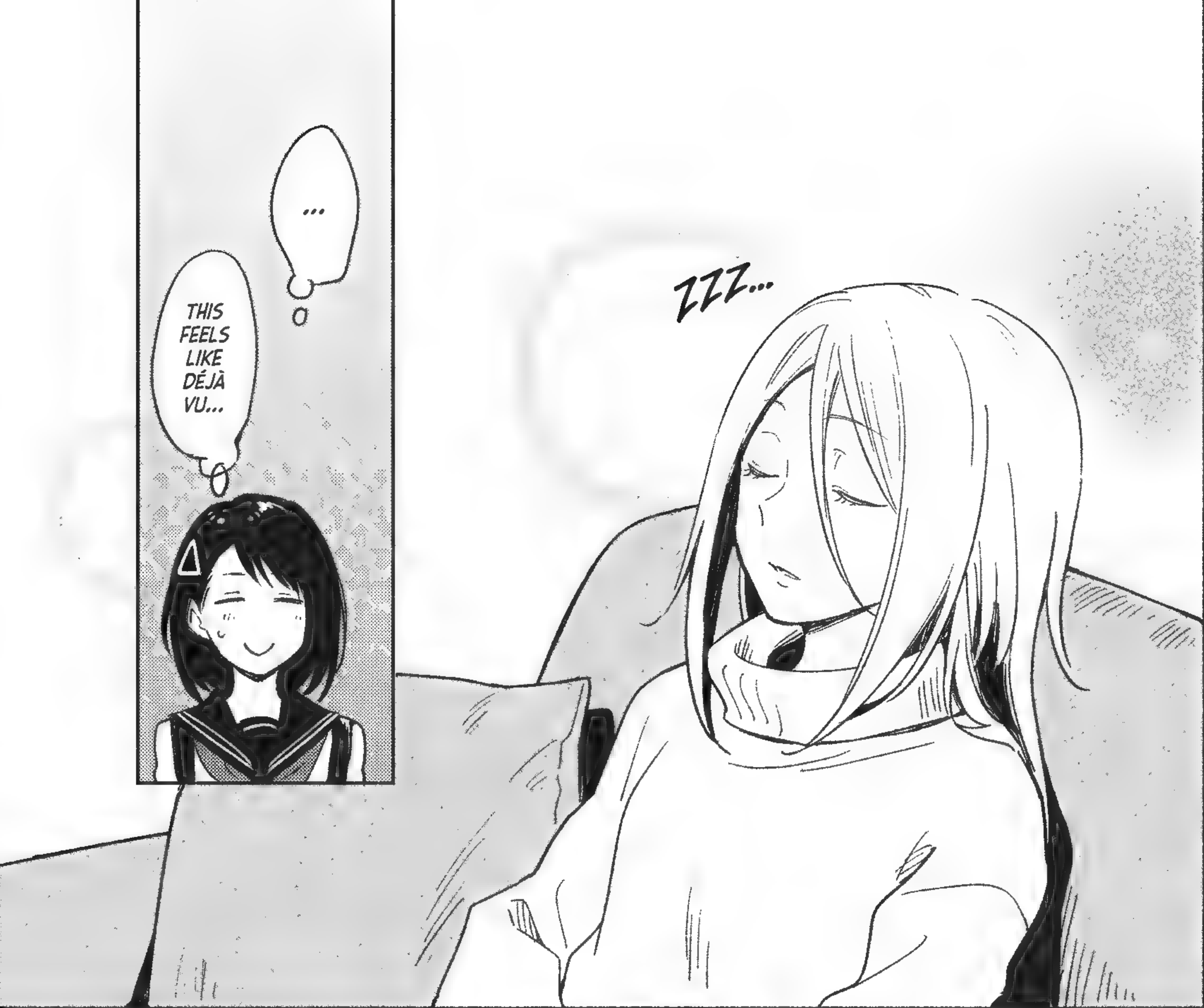
...I
WANNA
DIE!

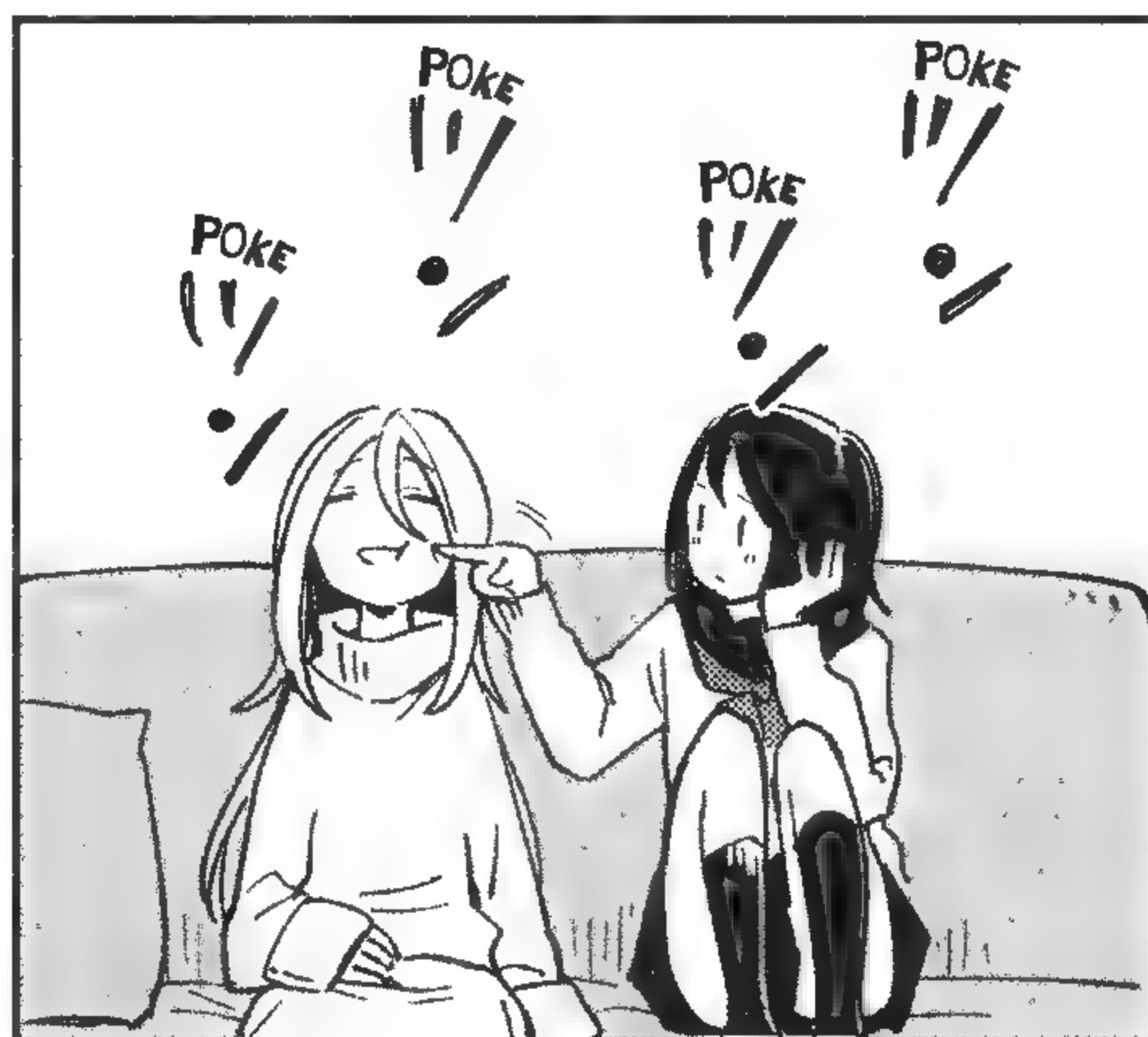
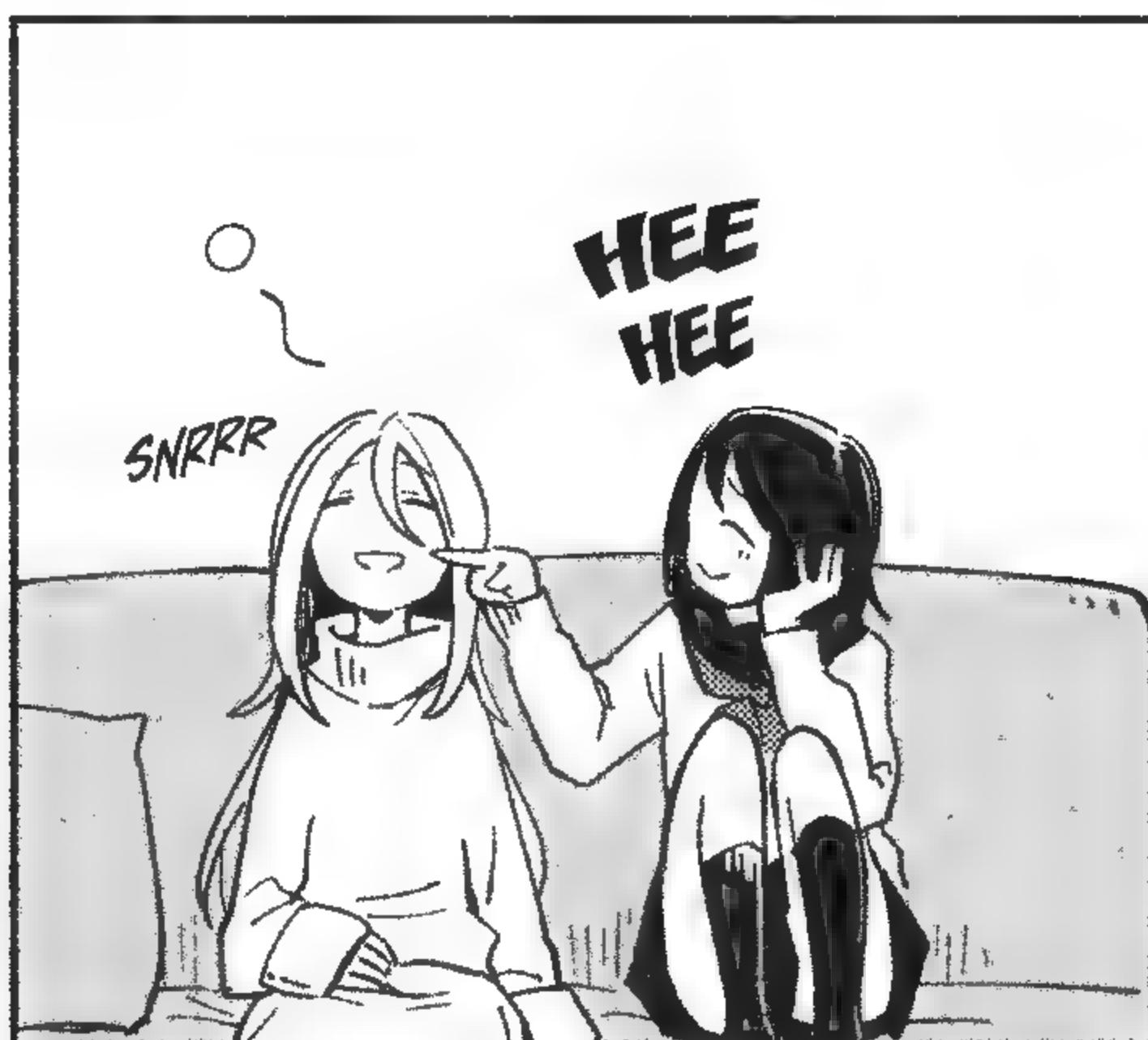
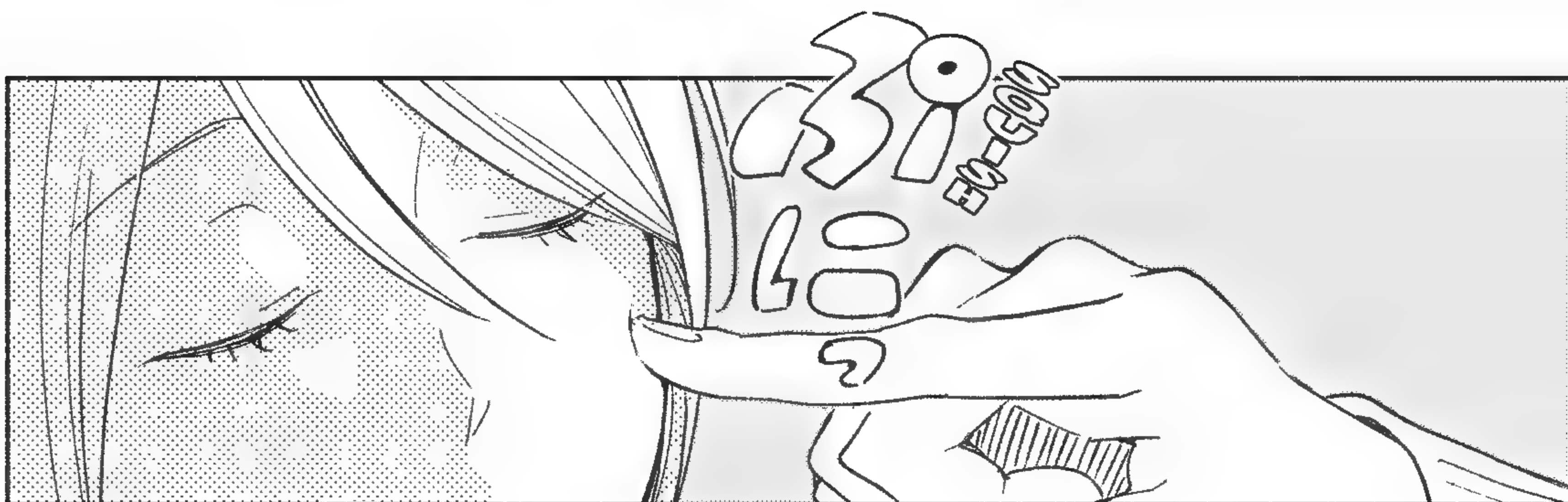












BECAUSE
I...

TICK
+
+
"

...WANTED
THIS LOVE...

...TO MEAN
SOMETHING...

TICK...
+
+
:

TICK
+
+
"

BECAUSE
I SAW A
RAINBOW,
SO I WAS
IN A RARE
GOOD
MOOD...

...OR...
TICK
+
+
"

TICK
+
+
"

BECAUSE
OF THAT
DREAM
I HAD...

...OR...

TICK
+
+
"

TICK
+
+
"

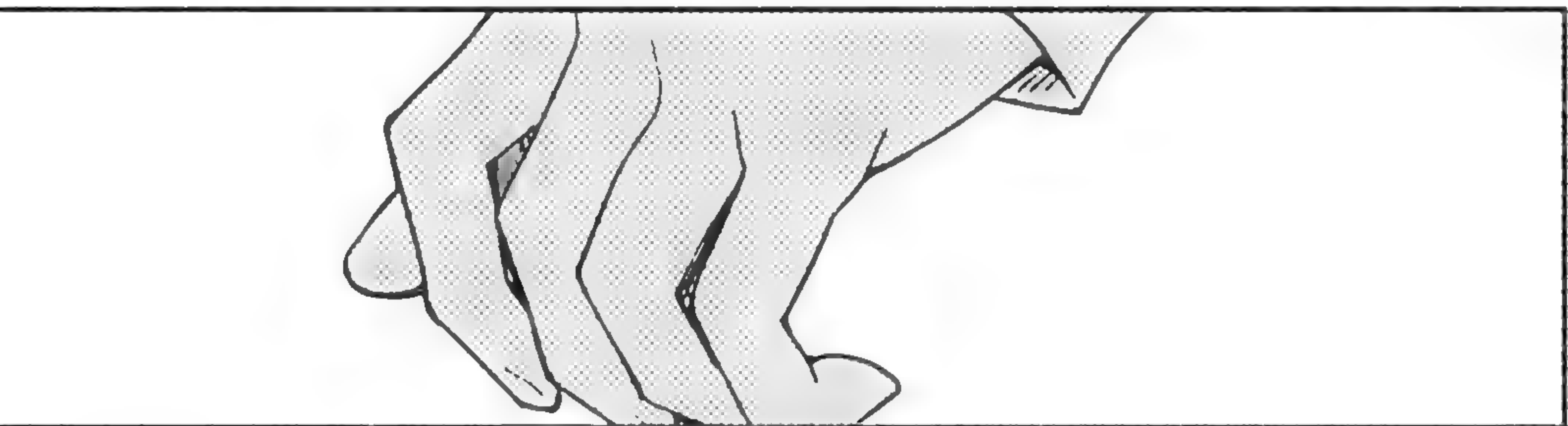
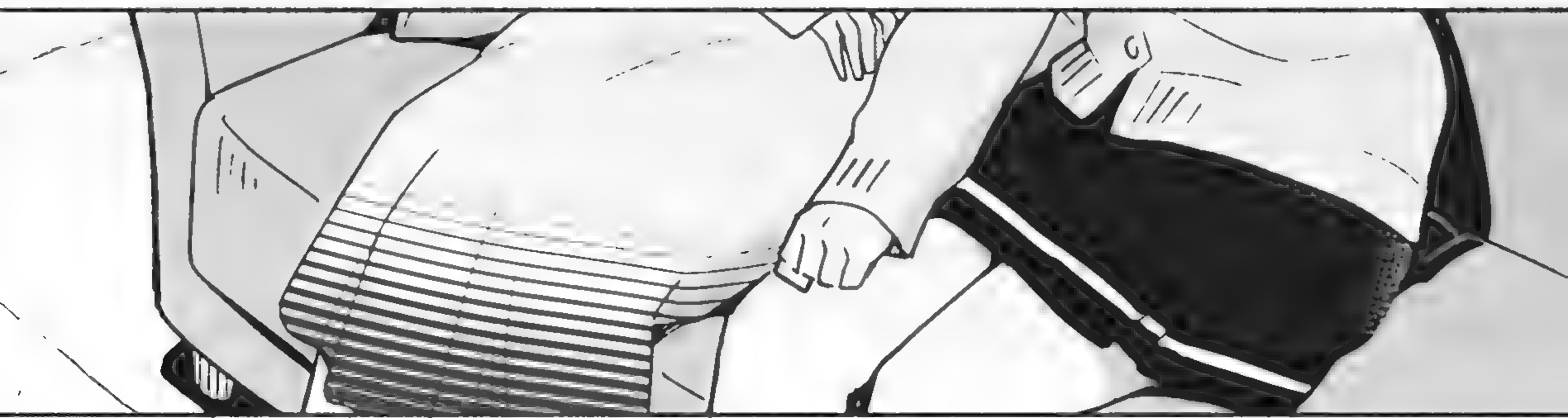
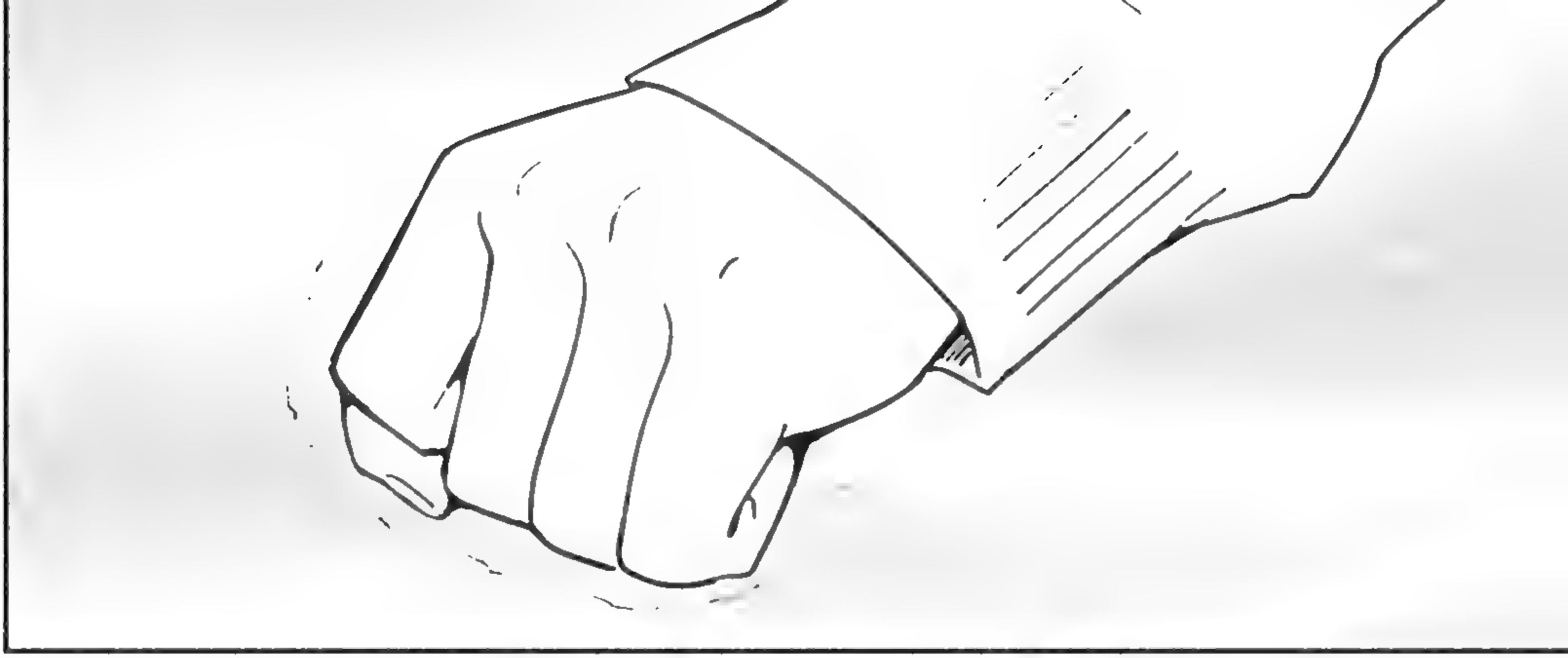


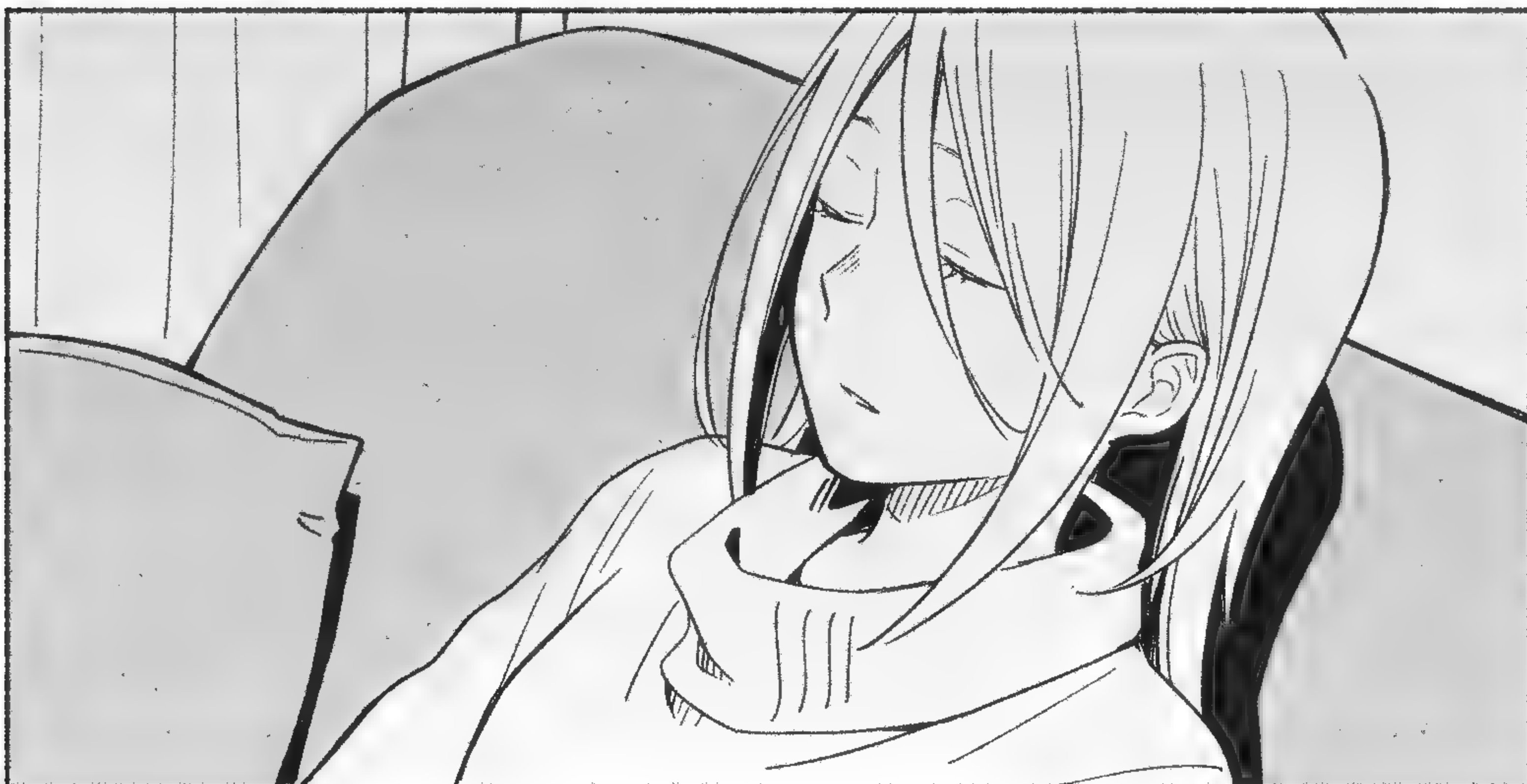
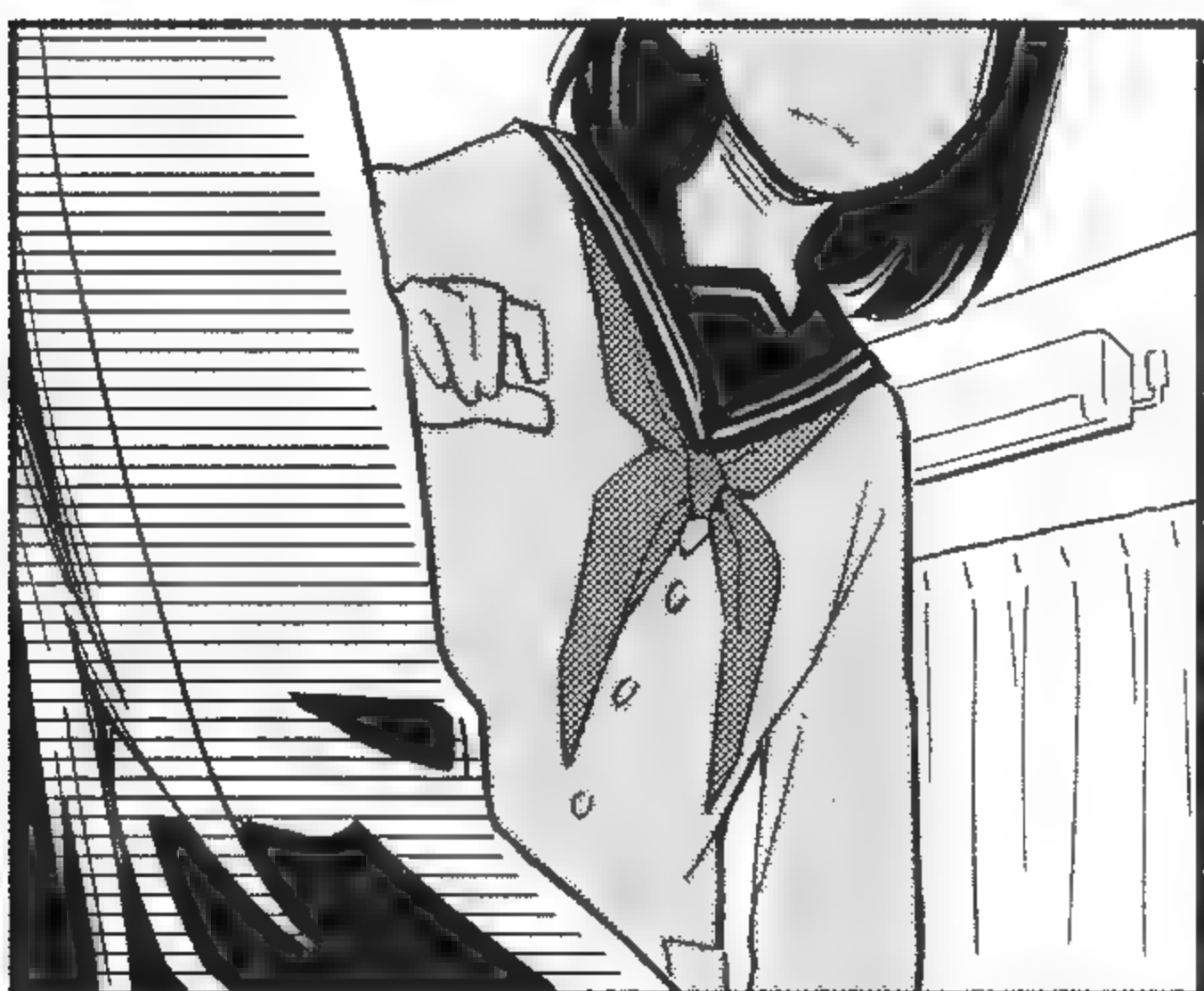
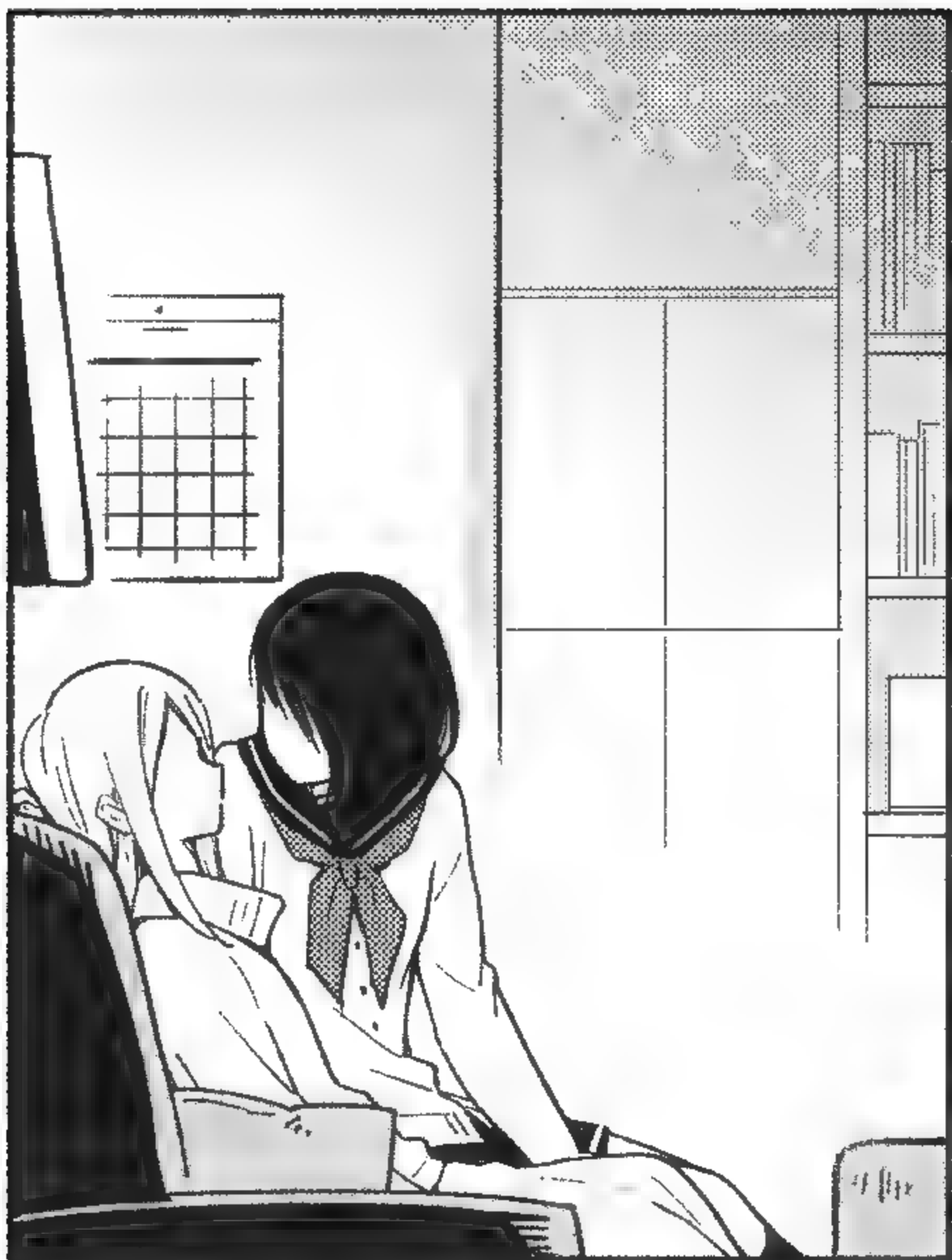
ONE
MOMENT IS
ENOUGH...

IF IT
GIVES
ME THE
COURAGE
TO MOVE
FORWARD...

... THEN
THE REASONS
DON'T
MATTER.

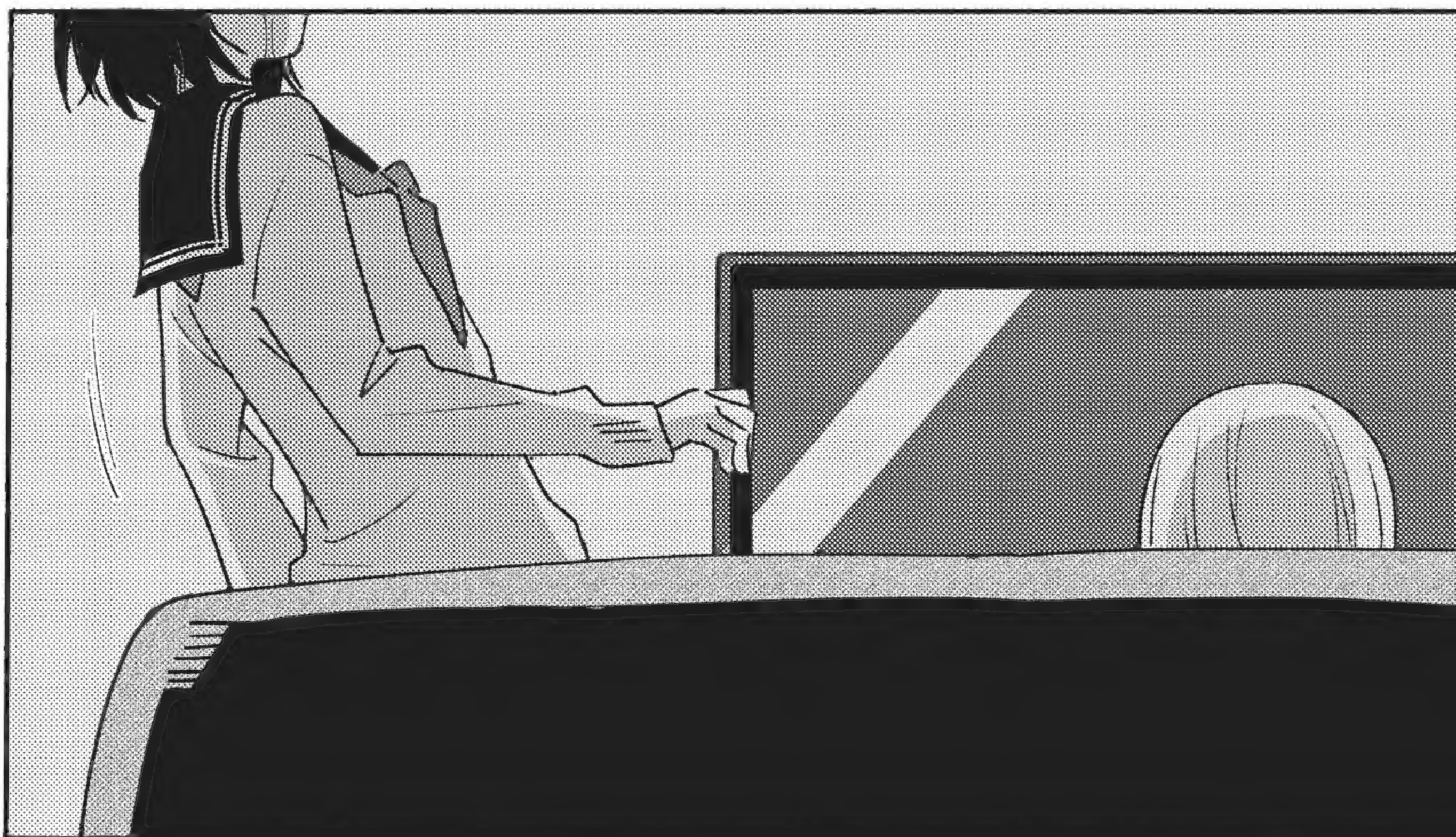
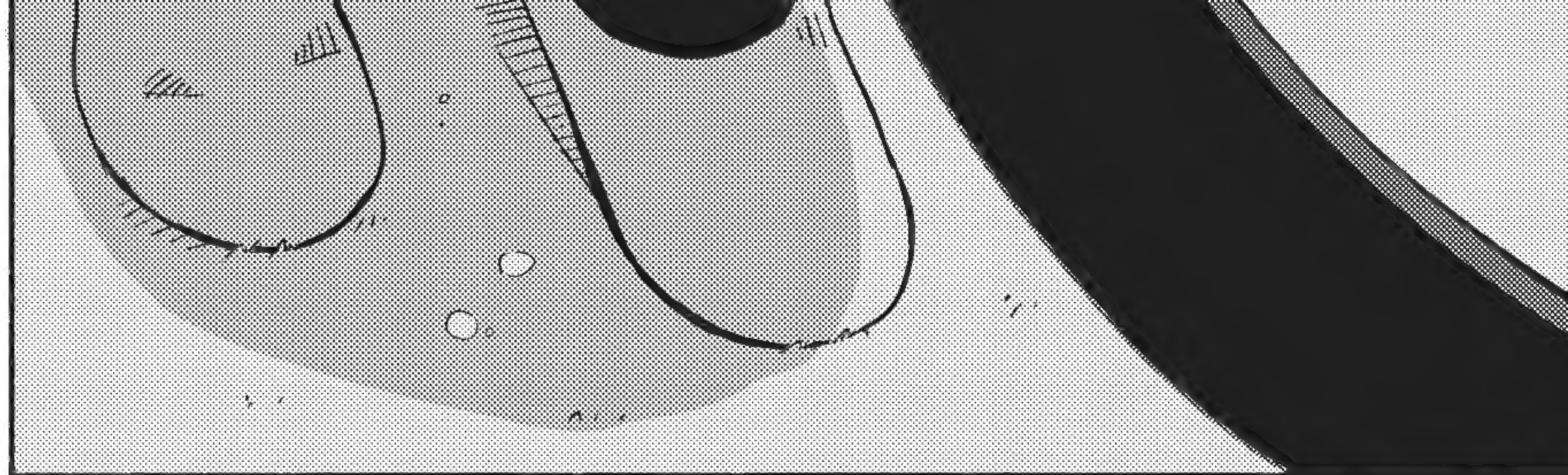


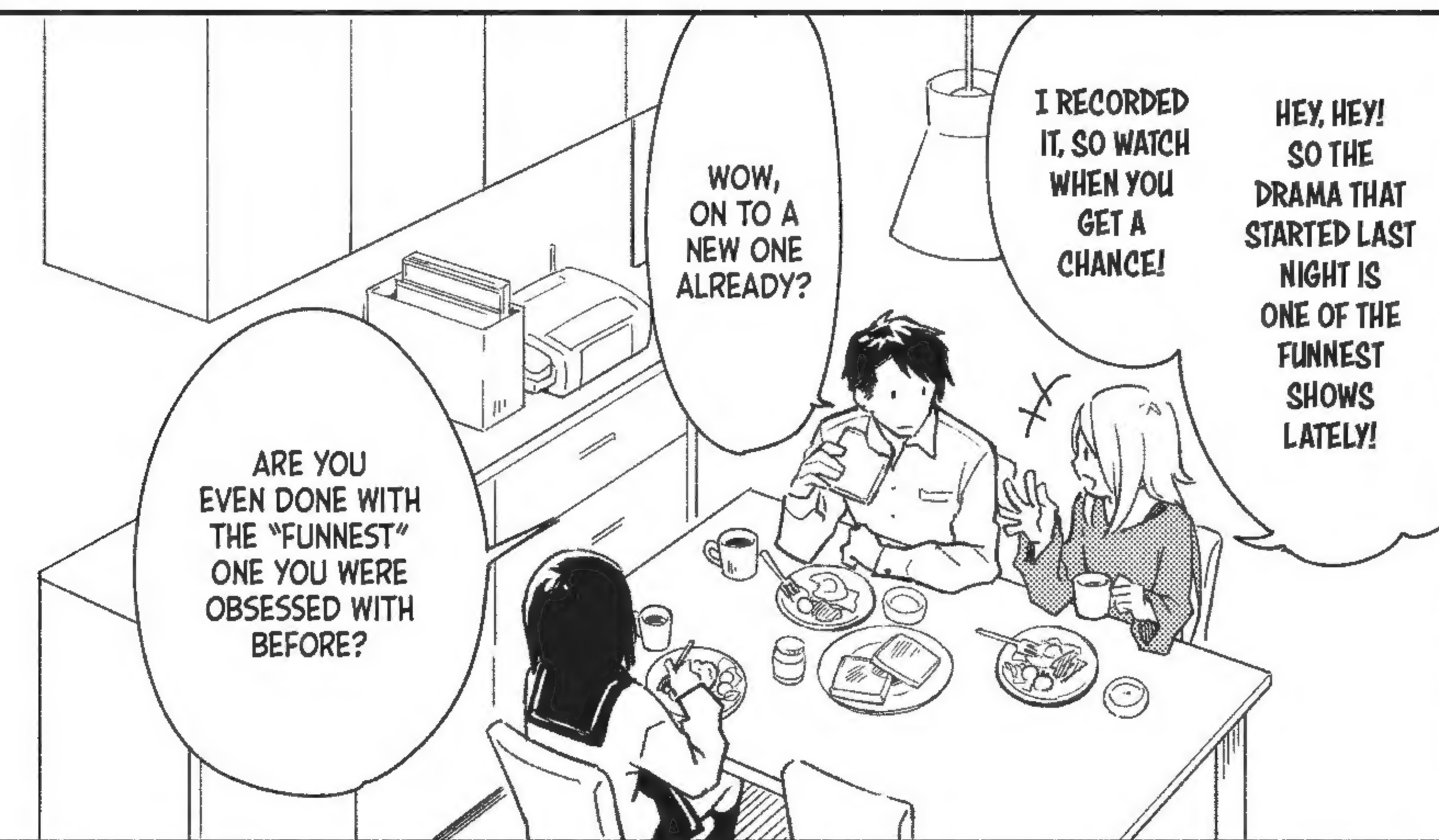






H...
HUH?





BUT...

...I UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY MEANT.





MY
FIRST CRUSH
WAS OVER
TOO SOON—
LIKE THE
FINALE OF SOME
DRAMA THAT
PASSED ME BY.

To be continued.

*If I Could
Reach You*